Changed Brides

E. D. E. N. Southworth

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Cornelia A. Colson

THE CHANGED BRIDES

OR

WINNING HER WAY

BY

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THE CHANGED BRIDES.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE EVE OF A GRAND WEDDING.

Blow, blow, thou wintry wind!
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Altho' thy breath be rude.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky!
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot;
Tho' thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remembered not—SHAKSPEARE.

A WILD and wintry night, in a wild and wintry scene! The old turnpike road running through the mountain pass, lonely at the best times, seemed quite deserted now.

The old Scotch toll-gate keeper sat shivering over his blazing hickory wood fire, and listening to the dashing rain and beating wind that seemed to threaten the destruction of his rude dwelling.

His old wife sat near him, spinning yarn from a small wheel that she turned with the united action of hand and foot.

"Ugh!" shuddered the old man, as a blast fiercer than ever shook the house, "it 'ill ding down the old dwelling next, and no harm done! An it were once blown away, the company would behoove to build us anither strong

enough to stand the storms o' these parts. Hech! but it's awfu' cold."

"Pit anither log on the fire, gudeman. Wood's plenty enough, that's a blessing," said the old woman, without ceasing to turn her wheel.

"What's the use, Jenny? Ye'll no warm sic an old place as this. Eh, woman, but whiles my knees are roasting, my back is freezing."

"Aweel, then gae away to bed wi' ye, Andy, and I'll tuck ye up warm, and bring ye your hot toddy."

"Nay, Jenny, worse luck, I maun sit up to let the bridegroom through the gate."

"The bridegroom? Hoot, man! He'll no pass the road on sic a wild night as this."

"Will he no, and his bonny bride waiting? Jenny, woman, what like o' wind or weather would ha' stopt *me* the day we were gaun to be married? So ye maun gie me my pipe, gudewife, for I bide here to open the gate for the blithe bridegroom to pass through."

"But he maun see that no tender lassie can take the road in sic a storm as this, and they were to be married by special licence at nine, and gae away in a grand traveling carriage at ten, to meet the steamboat at eleven. But that can no be now, for the rain is comin down like Noah's flood, and the wind blowing a hurricane, to say naething o' the roads all being turned into rinning rivers," argued Jenny.

"It will be for *her* to decide whether it can or canna be. It will be for *him* to take the road in the worst weather that ever fell from heaven, if it be to keep his tryst with his troth-plighted bride. So gie me my pipe, Jenny, for I'se stop up to let the bridegroom gae by."

"He willna come now, and so ye'll see, gudeman," said the wife, as she filled his pipe, and pressed the tobacco well down into the bowl with her big forefinger.

"An he does na come through wind or rain or snow, or ony ither like o' weather the Lord please to send this night, and I were Miss Anna Lyon, I'd cast him off in the morn like old shoes," nodded Andy, as he took the pipe from his wife and put it into his mouth.

"But don't ye see, gudeman, that it 'll be nae use. She *canna* travel on sic a night as this."

"I'm no that sure she will be called upon to travel the night. I heard a rumor they had changed all that. And there was to be a grand wedding at the old Hall, and a ball and a supper, and that the bonny bride and bridegroom wouldna gae away till the morn. And I'se believe it," said Andy, taking the big tongs, picking up a live coal, and beginning to light his pipe.

"Hoot, man, that will be n decent. She'll behoove to marry and gae away like ither brides, but she'll no be married and gae away the night. The wedding maun be pit off," said Jenny, resuming her place at the wheel.

"Pit off! It hae been pit off twice a'ready, once when the old Judge Lyon died, then when the old lady died. An' it be pit off for a third time, it 'll never take place. But it will no be put off. He'll keep his tryst, and she'll keep her word. Worse luck that I hae to bide up to let him through."

"An' he maun come, pity he could na ha' come sooner."

"Hoot, gudewife, how could he? The steamer does na stop at the Stormy Petrel Landing until nigh noon, and it will be a good fifty miles from here. And he traveling in his ain carriage without a change of horses all the way over sic roads, and in sic weather as this? How will he come sooner?"

"Eh? but I wish he were here!" cried the old woman.

"There he'll be now!" exclaimed the old man, rising and listening, as in a temporary lull of the tempest the sound of carriage wheels was heard dashing, rumbling and tumbling along the road.

"Take your big shawl about you," said Jenny, rising and reaching down a heavy gray "maud" from its peg, and throwing it over Andy's shoulders, as, with a lighted candle in his hand, he went to open the door.

"Hech, sirs! what a night to take the road in! Naething but a waiting bride should fetch a man forth in sic weather!" exclaimed the old toll-taker, as a blast of wind and rain blew out his candle, and whirled his shawl up over his head.

"Shut the door, gudeman, or we'll both be drowned in our ain house, and bide a wee till I bring ye the lantern. Ye'll no be able to take a lighted candle out there," said Jenny, as she ran to a corner cupboard and brought forth

an old horn machine big enough for a lighthouse or a watch tower. She lit the candle end that was in it, and handed it to Andy.

He having, meanwhile, fastened his great shawl with several strong pins and skewers, once more opened the door, and went forth into the pitch dark night and raging storm.

A spacious traveling carriage stood at the toll-gate, with two crimson lamps glowing luridly through the dark, driving tempest.

Holding down his hat with one hand and carrying the lantern with the other, old Andy pushed on towards the carriage, and saw that its door stood open, and a young man in a heavy traveling cloak was leaning out.

"Be gude to us, sir! is it yoursel', sure enough? Troth, I said ye would come," said Andy, with a welcoming smile.

"Come! why, to be sure I would come. Did you think that any sort of weather would have stopped me on such an occasion as this? Why, Birney, I would have come if it had rained pitchforks, points downward, or wild cats and mad dogs," laughed the young man.

"Sae I said, sir; sae I said!"

"But, Birney, my friend, I must get out and stretch my limbs a little. I want to be able to stand when I get to the Hall; but really, I have been cramped up in this close carriage so many hours, riding over this beast of a country so many miles, without seeing a single place where I could stop for refreshment, that—that—in short, Birney, you must let me out and let me in," said the traveler.

"Surely, Mr. Alexander! surely, sir! and much honor to my humble home," said the old toll-taker, smiling, and bowing respectfully.

The young man, notwithstanding his "cramped" condition, leaped lightly from his carriage, drew his traveling cloak closely around him, hoisted a large umbrella, and unceremoniously preceded his host to the house, where he burst suddenly in upon Jenny, who was in the act of taking a kettle of boiling water from the fire.

"Gude save us! Mr. Alick, is it yoursel'? I could hardly believe ony gentleman in his sober sinses would take the road on sic a night!"

"It is myself, Mistress Birney—that I know; but as to being in my sober senses, I am not quite so sure. I see you've got some hot water there. I hope you have also got a sample of that fine old Scotch whiskey your husband used to drink in remembrance of your old country. If so, Mistress Birney, I'll thank you to make me a tumbler of hot toddy. It would be very acceptable in such weather as this," said "Mr. Alick," as he threw off his cloak and his cap, and dropped himself down into old Andy's own armchair, in the warm chimney corner.

"Surely, sir, surely, Mr. Alick! I'se make it directly. I'se e'en now just gaun to mix the gudeman's night drink for himsel'," smiled Jenny, hospitably.

"All right! mix mine at the same time," said the young man, stretching out his feet to the fire, and indulging in a great yawn.

"And mix it in the big stone pitcher with the zinc cover, so it will keep hot while we sit and drink the bonny bride, Miss Anna Lyon's health," said old Andy as he came in and closed the door to keep out the driving rain.

"Oh, look here! You know I've no time for health-drinking; I'm due at the Hall these three hours; only this horrid weather, and these beastly roads have delayed me," exclaimed Mr. Aleck, rising impatiently and standing before the blazing fire.

He was a very good-looking young fellow, as he stood there. He had a tall, well-proportioned form, fine regular features, a fair, roseate complexion, light yellow hair, and bright blue eyes—smiling eyes that seemed to love all they looked upon.

Quickly and skilfully Jenny Birney made the toddy and poured it into large tumblers that she had previously heated by scalding them out with boiling water.

Once more Mr. Alick dropped himself into old Andy's chair, while he received one of the glasses from his host.

"Eh, there, sir; it's as hot as love!" said the old man, as he passed the pitcher that his guest might replenish his glass at his pleasure.

"It is very good," admitted the young man when he had finished his second tumbler. "Many thanks to you, Mistress Birney for the aid and comfort you have given me. I feel as if you had saved my life. I can now do

the distance between this and the Hall without breaking down. And now I must be off. Good evening to you, Mistress Birney."

And the traveler put on his cloak and cap, took up his umbrella, and escorted by Andy, left the cottage.

"Oh, by the way, Birney, you may bring out some of that hot stuff to my coachman. Poor devil! it will do him no harm after he has been perched up there so long in the rain. But hark ye, Birney! don't let it be too stiff; I don't want the fellow to see more mists before his eyes than the night and the storm make," said Mr. Alick as he got into the carriage.

Old Andy toddled back to his house, and after a few minutes reappeared at the carriage with a mug of the same restorative for the man as he had lately administered to the master.

The chilled and wearied coachman turned it down his throat almost at a gulp, returned the mug, and thanked the donor.

Then he gathered up his reins, cracked his whip, and started his horses at as brisk a trot as might be deemed safe on that dark night over that rough road.

The old turnpike-keeper hurried out of the storm into the shelter of his own cottage.

"Hech! it's an awfu' night! I'm glad he's come and gone. We may pit up the shutters now, gudewife; we'll no be troubled wi' ony more travelers the night," said old Andy, as he shook his shawl free from the clinging rain drops, and hung it up in its place.

"Now, sit ye down in your own comfortable chair, gudeman, and I'll brew ye a bowl o' hot punch. Eh, hinney, ye'll be needing it after sic an' exposure to the elements," said Jenny, as she replaced the kettle over the blaze, and drew Andy's old arm-chair before the fire.

With a sigh of infinite relief, he let himself sink into the inviting seat, kicked off his heavy shoes, and stretched his stockened feet to the genial warmth of the hearth. Andy did not rejoice in the luxury of a pair of slippers.

"Eh, Jenny, woman, it's good to feel oneself at ease at one's own fireside at last," said the old man, as he took from the hand of his wife a smoking tumbler of punch.

"'It's hot as love,' as you say," she nodded.

"Eh, so it is; what's the hour, gudewife?"

"It's gone weel on to ten," she answered, glancing at the tall old clock that stood in the corner, and reached from floor to ceiling.

"And I'se gaun to bed immediately, no to be bothered wi' any more travelers the night," said Andy, blowing and sipping his punch.

But Andy reckoned without his host, as many of his betters do.

Just at that moment there came a rap at the door, so low, however, that it could scarcely be heard amid the roaring of the storm.

Yet both husband and wife turned and listened.

It was repeated.

"What's that?" asked Andy.

"There's some one outside," said Jenny.

The rap was reiterated.

"Who the de'il can it be, at this unlawful hour o' the night? Gae see, Jenny, woman. And if it's ony vagrants bang the door in their faces. I'se no be troubled wi' ony more callers the night!" cried the old man, impatiently.

Before he had well done grumbling, the old woman had gone to the door and opened it, letting in a furious blast of wind and rain.

"Gude guide us!" she exclaimed, starting back, aghast, at what she saw without.

"What the de'il is it then, gudewife?" nervously demanded Andy, starting up and seizing his old musket from its hooks above the chimney-piece. Andy was thinking only of thieves, as is usual with many who have little to lose.

"Pit up your gun, gudeman, it's no what ye think," said Jenny, once more approaching the door to peep out at the wretch that stood dripping and shivering outside.

"For the love of Heaven, let me in a little while. I will not stay many minutes," pleaded a plaintive voice from the darkness.

"Who is it?" inquired Andy, coming cautiously forward in his stocking feet.

"It's some poor lassie, as far as I can make out. Come in wi' ye then," said Jenny, stretching the door wide open, though the wind and the rain rushed in, flooding the floor where they stood.

"Ay, come in, and ye maun, and dinna stand there like a lunatic keeping the door open and letting in the weather," growled Andy, as he toddled back to his comfortable chair and dropped into it.

Before he had half uttered his churlish invitation, the stranger had entered, and now stood in the room, with the rain running from her dark raiment, while Jenny shut and bolted the door.

"Now then, who are ye? and what brings ye tramping on sic a night as this?" sternly demanded Andy, as he turned and stared at the stranger.

She wore a long dark gray cloak with a hood; the cloak completely concealed her form and its hood overshadowed her face. That was all that Andy could make of her appearance then.

"Who are ye, I ask, and where are ye gaun the night," he angrily repeated.

The stranger did not answer except by dropping her face upon her open hands.

"Andy, dinna ye see she canna speak? For the sake of our own poor lost Katie, we maun have pity. Come away to the fire, my poor lass, and dry your clothes, whiles I get ye something warm to take the chill out o' your poor shivering body," said Jenny, kindly placing her hand upon the girl's shoulder and gently urging her towards the fireplace.

"I'm of opinion that ye'd better find out who she is, and where she came from, and where she's gaun, before ye press upon her the hospitalities of an honest house," grumbled Mr. Birney.

"Whist, gudeman! I might speer a dizzen questions, but dinna ye see for yoursel' that she's in na condition to answer ane?" said Jenny, in a low voice.

Andy growled something in which the words "tramping hizzy" were the only ones audible.

"Come let me hae your cloak, hinny, to hang it up to dry. See, it's wringing wet. Nay, nay, dinna resist gude offices," said Mrs. Birney, with kind persistence, as she

saw that the girl made some little, mute, pathetic resistance to the removal of her outer garment.

Jenny gently took it off her and hung it on the back of a chair to dry by the fire.

And the young stranger stood revealed in all her loveliness and sorrow.

She was a young, slight, graceful creature, with a thin, pale face, dark hair and dark eyebrows, long, black eyelashes, and large, soft, gray eyes, so full of pleading sadness that their glances went straight to the heart of Jenny Birney. It was a child's face; but ah, woe! it was a matron's form revealed there.

"Wae-sooks!" exclaimed the good wife in consternation, as she gazed upon the young thing, and saw that, child-like as she looked, she had been married, or—— ought to have been.

Again the little, pale hands went up and covered the little, woe-worn face.

"Sit ye down," said Mrs. Birney, kindly. "Ye are no able to stand."

And she drew her own low, cushioned chair to the chimney-corner, and with gentle force pushed the poor child into it. And then she took down her little black teapot from the corner cupboard and began to make tea.

Mr. Birney watched the process in strong disapprobation.

His wife raised a deprecating glance to his face, murmuring, in a low tone:

"We maun be pitiful, Andy! for our poor lost Katie's sake, we maun be pitiful."

He answered that appeal by growling forth the words.

"Aweel, aweel, Jenny woman, hae your ain way! hae your ain way! Eh! but ye've had it these forty years and mair! And it's no likely that ye'll gie it up now!"

And so saying, the old man put his pipe in his mouth and resigned himself to circumstances.

Mrs. Birney made a cup of tea and a round of toast, and set them on a little stand beside her guest.

"Now eat and drink and ye'll be better. Nay, nay, dinna shake your poor little head! do as I bid ye. I had a child o' my ain once. She has been in heaven I hope, these twenty years. Sae ye see I hae a soft place in my

heart for children, especially for lassies; sae eat and drink, and be comforted and strengthened, and then maybe ye'll tell me how ye came to be out in the weather, and what I can do for ye besides giving you a bit and sup and a bed to lie on," coaxed the good woman.

"Thanks, thanks," murmured the girl, as she raised the cup, and with a feverish thirst eagerly drank the tea.

"Try some of the toast. It is done with milk; it will nourish ye," hospitably urged Jenny.

"Please—I cannot eat a morsel, and—I must go now," answered the young stranger, rising.

"Go now! Are ye daft?" exclaimed Mrs. Birney, in dismay; while Mr. Birney took the pipe from his mouth and stared.

"No, I am not 'daft,' though I know how mad my purpose must seem," calmly answered the girl, taking her cloak from the chair upon which it was drying by the fire.

"But—I thought ye came here for a night's lodging, and——"

"Oh, no; I had no such design," sighed the girl.

"But— an' ye didna come for a night's lodging what *did* ye come for?"

"I was nearly spent with struggling on in the face of the tempest. I was so beaten by the wind and the rain that I thought I should have dropped and died; I almost wish I had. But I saw the light in your window and I tried to reach it, and I did. I came in only to rest and breathe a little while, and get strength to go on again."

"But where did ye come from, my poor child?" inquired the pitying woman.

"I came from Washington by the stage-coach. It put me down at the Cross Roads, ten miles from this place."

"Gude save us! and ye walked all that way through the storm?"

"Yes, and was nearly exhausted; but now, thanks to your charity, I feel refreshed, and able to pursue my journey," said the young girl, as she tied her cloak, and drew its hood over her head.

"Indeed, then, and ye'll no do onything o' the sort. Eh, sirs, are we heathen to let a wee bit lassie gae forth alane on sic a stormy winter night as this, when we wouldna turn an enemy's dog from the door? Sit ye

down, my lass, and dinna ye mind the gudeman's growling. His bark is aye worse than his bite," said Mrs. Birney.

And here Mr. Birney took his pipe from his mouth, and spoke these gracious words:

"Bide ye here for the present, an' ye will. I dinna like tramps as a permanent institution in the house, but I'll no turn ye out into the storm, sae bide where ye be."

And having uttered this oracle, old Andy replaced his pipe between his lips, and smoked vigorously to make up for lost time.

"Ye hear what the gudeman says? Hark ye now to the wisdom of age, and bide ye quiet till I make you a bed, and I'll wrap ye weel and pit ye warm to sleep the night, and in the morn ye may gae where ye like."

"Thanks—a thousand thanks for your dear mercy! but in the morning it will be too late. Ah, heaven, yes!" exclaimed the girl, as a sudden terror wildly dilated her large gray eyes. "I must go on to-night, or fail, where failure would be despair and death!"

"Gae on to-night! Gude save us! gae on where?" exclaimed the wondering woman.

"To Old Lyon Hall," answered the stranger, moving towards the door.

"Stay—come back! Ye are stark daft! To the Hall?" cried Jenny, following her guest.

"Yes, to the old Hall," said the stranger, pausing courteously.

"Why, that's where the grand wedding will be the night."

"I know it," said the girl.

"But—ye'll surely no be one o' the invited guests?" exclaimed Jenny in bewilderment.

"Oh, no," replied the girl, with a strange smile.

"Look ye, lass. Who be ye? What be your name, an' ye have no objection to tell it?" gravely inquired Mrs. Birney.

"I have no objection to tell my name; it has never been sullied by dishonor; it is Anna Lyon," replied the girl, with her hand upon the door-latch.

"Anna Lyon! Sign us, and save us! that is the name

of the bride that is to be married to-night!" cried Jenny Birney, aghast.

"I know it is," quietly replied the girl.

"And ye hae the same name?"

"The very same," said the stranger.

"Gude save us! then ye'll be kin to the family?"

"No, no kin," answered the girl, calmly. Then to herself she murmured, "*I*—'a little more than kin,' *he* 'a little less than kind.'"

"What are ye muttering to yoursel'? Ye say ye're no kin to the family, and if ye are no, what will be taking you to the old Hall the night?"

"Something more than a matter of life and death. And oh, I must be gone!" said the girl, with the same look of terror that she had shown once before, now smiting all the remaining color from her pale face, and leaving it white as marble.

"Good-by—good-by, and a thousand heartfelt thanks for all your kindness," she added.

While she spoke she deftly slid the bolts of the door, and as she ceased she quickly slipped through it, and ran away like one who feared to be hindered or pursued.

"Stop! stop!" screamed Jenny, rushing after her, and looking out into the night.

But her strange visitor had vanished in the darkness.

"Hech! she's clean daft, and she'll perish in the storm!" cried Jenny in consternation, as she drew in her head.

"Come away, gudewife, and shut the door!" bawled old Andy, provoked past his patience.

"Eh, gudeman, rin—rin after her. Ye may catch her an ye start now," prayed Jenny, pulling down her husband's shawl from its peg, and throwing it over his shoulders—"rin, rin for your life, Andy!"

"De'il be in my legs, then, if I budge a foot from the fire! I'm in a condition to rin, am I no? wi' both my shoes off, and mysel' soaking wi' sweat! I'll no rin for ony daft lass or lad in Christendom!" grumbled the old man.

"But for the Lord's sake, Andy!" pleaded the woman.

"I would do onything in reason for the Lord's sake, an He distinctly called me, but I'm no conscious of any special call to pit myself forward in this work. Sae just shut up the house, Jenny, woman, and come away to bed.

And I'll no open again this night to man or woman, saint or devil, so there now!" growled old Andy.

"I'se shut the door, but I'se nae shut the window. And I'se no gaun to bed this night, I'se sit up and show a light, if the poor wandering lassie behooves to come back," said Mrs. Birney, firmly, as she fastened the door, and set the lantern on the little stand under the window, with the light turned towards the road.

"The more fool you," observed Mr. Birney, as he began to draw off his stockings, and prepare himself for his bed, that stood conveniently near, in a recess curtained off from the other portion of the room.

Mrs. Birney drew her spinning wheel to the chimney corner nearest the window, where she had placed the light, and she sat down and began to spin.

"Ye'll no be whirling that machine and keeping me awake, Jenny, woman!" expostulated the old man as he got into bed.

"But if I maun sit up, I maun na lose my time."

"Then knit or sew."

She good-humoredly put aside her wheel and took from the top of the corner cupboard her work-basket half filled with woolen socks, which she sat down to darn.

Old Andy was soon snoring under his blankets.

Jenny sat darning and sighing, and occasionally peering through the window into the darkness without. The violence of the storm seemed to be subsiding, though still it rained heavily.

"It's like murder," she murmured. "And, if she be found cold and dead in the morn I shall never forgi'e mysel'. I shall never be able to sleep again. Eh! but I wish I had rin out after her mysel'. But then the gudeman would na hae let me. Hech! but they get hard and selfish wi' age and infirmities, these men. Eh! how he sleeps and snores, as if there was no misery in the world," she added, glancing at the bed.

But the old curmudgeon's rest was destined to be broken.

There came the sound of horse's hoofs dashing along the flooded road. The toll-gate bar was cleared at a bound. Jenny heard the spring and splash, and she started to her feet, dropping her work-basket.

The next moment there came a loud rapping at the door. It aroused the old man from his sleep.

"What the de'il is that?" he exclaimed, angrily.

"There's ane without," whispered Jenny, in a scared tone, trembling in spite of herself.

"Worse luck! It is a Witch's Sabbath and are all the warlocks and witches riding to it by this road the night?" he growled.

The knocking grew louder.

"Who is it, Jenny?" he cried.

"I dinna know," whispered the woman.

"Canna ye gae and see?"

The knocking became vociferous, the horseman seemed to be hammering at the door with the loaded end of his riding-whip.

"Haud your noise out there, will you then!" bawled the old man, bouncing out of bed, throwing a blanket around him and seizing his blunderbus, while Jenny crept to the door and cautiously opened it, keeping herself behind it.

The rain had nearly ceased and the sky was clearing.

A tall, stout, dark man, in a dark riding-coat, stood outside. With one hand he held the bridle of his horse, and with the other the handle of his riding-whip, with which he had just rapped.

So much Jenny, cautiously peeping around the edge of the door, could make out.

The old toll-taker came forward, wrapped in his blanket like a North American Indian, and carrying his musket in his hand, and growling:

"Am I no to have ony peace or quiet the night? I'd as weel be keeper o' one o' these new-fangled railway stations where the trains are aye coming and going day and night, instead o' this once quiet toll-gate. Who be ye, sir, and what's your will?" he growled at this second stranger.

"I am a traveler going to Old Lyon Hall; and I wish to know the nearest road," answered the horseman. But a sudden parting blast of wind drowned half his words.

"And by the way, how came ye on this side of the road, when the great bar is up for the night?" angrily demanded the toll-taker."

"Oh, my horse took it at a bound."

"An he had broken your neck it might have been a gude job and saved the hangman trouble," growled old Andy.

"Thanks," laughed the stranger, "but there was not a chance of it; my horse is a famous hunter. Will you direct me on my road?"

"*Where* did you say you were going?"

"To Old Lyon Hall."

"To Old Lyon Hall!—Jenny, woman, here is anither one! It's *there* they are holding the witches' dance and no wedding, for the warlocks and witches that flit by this way are no wedding guests," said the old man, turning to his wife.

"Will you be so good as to direct me to the Hall?" courteously persisted the traveler.

"Oh, ay, I'll direct ye fast enough; but be ye one o' the wedding guests?"

"No, not exactly," laughed the man.

"Hark to him, Jenny? how much he talks like the ither one! Then what's your business at the Hall the night? It's unco late to make a visit, and varry oncivil to go on-invited where they're hauding a bridal. Wouldna the morn serve your turn just as weel?" mockingly inquired Andy.

"No; the morning would be too late for my purpose. It is of the utmost importance that I should reach the Hall to-night!" said the horseman, beginning to grow restive under the influence of some hidden anxiety that he could not entirely conceal.

"Is it an affair of 'life and death?'" inquired Andy, with a touch of sarcasm in his tone, as he repeated the words that had been used by the unhappy girl who had preceded this stranger on this road.

"More—much more than life and death is involved," muttered the traveler, in a voice vibrating with the agitation that he could no longer control.

"Hark to him again, Jenny!" grinned the old man. "Just the way the ither one talked. The de'il maun be holding a levee at the Hall!"

"I beg you will not detain me; pray put me on my road," impatiently urged the stranger.

"Oh, ay! ye see the road before ye. Ye'll just face it and follow your nose, and it will lead to the old Hall. Ye canna miss it. It stands off about a quarter mile from the road, on the right. There's woods before it, and the Porcupine Mountains behind it. It will be the first grand like mansion ye'll come to, and the only one, an ye were to ride a hunder miles in that direction."

"Thanks," said the stranger, lifting his cap and remounting his horse.

"And oh, kind gentleman," said Jenny, coming forward, "an' ye should meet wi' a poor daft lassie who gaed before on the same road, ye'll no let her perish for the want of a helping hand. For the love of the Lord, ye'll get her under shelter or bring her back here."

"'A poor daft lassie,'" repeated the stranger, bewildered by the woman's words and manner.

"Ay, sir: a poor bit child wha canna guide hersel' to ony gude end."

"A young tramp, sir," explained the old man. "A young tramp who passed this way an hour ago; an ye should get her pit into a House of Correction, ye might be doing her good service."

"I have no time to stop, but if I should see the young woman I will do what I can for her. Good night," said the traveler, putting spurs to his horse, and galloping away as if determined not to be detained another moment.

"I'll tell you what, Jenny, there's something unco wrong up at the old Hall. And now shut up the house and come away to bed," said old Andy, turning from the door, and dragging his blanket behind him like a court train.

"I couldna sleep a wink wi'out hearing what becomes o' that poor houseless child. I'll sit up and sew, and show a light i' the window, in case she behooves to come back again," replied Mrs. Birney, replacing the lantern on the stand before the window, resuming her seat on her low chair in the chimney corner, and taking up her work, while the old man, for the last time that night, shut up the house and went to bed.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE OLD HALL.

Yes, there thou art below the hill,
By evergreens encircled still,
Old hall that time hath deigned to spare,
Mid rugged rocks and forests fair,
And nightshade o'er the casement creeping,
And owlet in the crevice sleeping,
And antique chairs and broidered bed,
By housewife's patient needle spread.—ANON.

OLD Lyon Hall lay at the foot of the Porcupine, an offshoot of the Alleghanies, in one of the wildest and most picturesque counties in Virginia.

It was built in the Tudor style of domestic architecture, very irregularly, with many gable ends, Gothic windows and twisted chimneys. Its walls of old red sandstone contrasted gloomily with the dark hue of the evergreen trees that bristled up above it, and gave the mountain its descriptive name.

Heavy woods, bare, gray crags, and tumbling torrents surrounded it, and gave a savage and sombre aspect to the scene. Below the Hall a turbulent little river, spanned by a rustic bridge, rushed and roared along its rocky bed.

The Hall was very old. It had been built nearly two hundred years ago by a Scotchman named Saul Sauvage Lyon, who had received a grant of the land from James the First. It had remained ever since in the family of the founder whose descendants had frequently distinguished themselves, as soldiers, or statesmen, in every epoch of the country's history, either as a colony or a commonwealth.

Some few years since, being the date of this story, the master of the Old Lyon Hall and Manor was General Leonard Lyon, a retired army officer, and a veteran of the war of eighteen hundred and twelve.

General Lyon had married very early in his youth, and had enjoyed many years of calm domestic happiness. But now his wife and children were all dead, and his only living descendant was his grandchild, the beautiful Anna Lyon, "sole daughter of 'his' house."

Added to the great sorrow of bereavement was vexation, that, for the want of male heirs, his old family estate must at last "fall to the distaff."

But there might be found a remedy to this lesser evil.

General Lyon had a younger brother, Chief Justice Lyon, of Richmond. And the Chief Justice had an only son.

Young Alexander Lyon was a bright, handsome, attractive lad, a few years older than his cousin Anna.

Under all the circumstances, if it was not perfectly proper, it was at least natural and pardonable that old General Lyon should wish his granddaughter to become the wife of his nephew, so that while she inherited his estate, she might perpetuate his name.

Quite early in the childhood of the boy and girl, the General proposed their betrothal to the Chief Justice, who eagerly acceded to the plan. And so the affair was settled—by the parents, It was not considered necessary to consult the children.

Alexander was sent to Yale College, where, for a few years, he led rather a fast life for a student.

And Anna was placed at a fashionable boarding school in New York, where she had a great deal more liberty than was good for her.

Twice a year the young persons were permitted to meet —when they spent the midsummer vacation at Old Lyon Hall, where the Chief Justice and his wife also came on a visit to the General, and when they kept the Christmas holidays at the splendid town house of the Chief Justice at Richmond, where the General also went to pay back his brother's visit. This arrangement was of course very agreeable to all parties.

But as the boy and girl grew towards manhood and womanhood, it was thought well to change this routine. And so, sometimes in the midsummer vacation, the whole party, consisting of both families, would go for a tour through the most attractive places of summer resort.

And at Christmas they would keep the holidays in Washington.

On all these occasions the young lady and gentleman, under the auspices of their elders, entered very freely into the fashionable amusements of the season, with the understanding, however, that they were not to fall in love, or even to flirt with any one but each other.

Miss Lyon and Mr. Alexander seemed at first to have no particular objection to this arrangement. They had always been fond of each other, much fonder than of any one else. But ah! theirs was not the love that would excuse, much less justify marriage.

It has been said that when two persons of like complexion and temperament intermarry, wise nature and sacred love have had nothing to do with the union. And the truth spoken to-day is as old as the creation of man.

Anna and Alexander were of the same complexion and the same temperament; both were plump, fair, blue-eyed and yellow-haired, both lively and fond of pleasure, and both, on the surface, and in matters of little moment, were amiable and yielding, but below the surface, and in affairs of importance, resolute and determined as destiny and death. In person and in character they were as much alike as twin brother and sister.

This similarity, while it made their association as relatives very agreeable, utterly precluded the possibility of their becoming lovers, in the common sense of the word. They did not know this, when their hearts were entirely free from any other attachment that might have awakened their consciousness.

There was no immediate hurry about the projected marriage. It was certain to take place, the parents concluded, and so they neither worried themselves nor their children prematurely.

Alexander had to finish his college course, to graduate and to make the "grand tour," as was usual with young gentlemen of his position.

When he should have accomplished all this, he would be about twenty-three years of age and his bride elect would be about eighteen—both quite young enough to marry, the old folks argued.

The plan was partly carried out.

Alexander Lyon graduated with honors and embarked for Europe. He traveled over quite a considerable portion of the Eastern Continent. He was gone two years, at the end of which he returned to claim his promised bride.

Active preparations were made for the marriage. But fate seemed to be against it. A few days before the one set apart for the ceremony, while the whole of both families were assembled at Old Lyon Hall to do honor to the occasion, Chief Justice Lyon was suddenly struck dead by apoplexy. Instead of a wedding there was a funeral, and the family went into mourning for a year.

At the end of that time preparations were again made for the marriage, which was again arrested by the hand of death.

A malignant fever was prevailing, and Mrs. Lyon, the widow of the Chief Justice, was one of its first victims. At length, at the close of this second term of mourning and seclusion, the household awoke as from a nightmare dream and busied itself with blithe bridal affairs.

The splendid city mansion and the fine old country house of the late Chief Justice were both renovated and refurnished in costly style for the reception of the new mistress.

It was settled that the marriage should take place early in November. In accordance with the old-time prejudices of General Lyon, it was to be solemnized, in the evening, in the great drawing-room of Old Lyon Hall, in the presence of a large party of friends, who were afterwards to be entertained with a ball and supper. The bride and groom were to leave the next morning for a short tour, after which they were to go to Richmond and settle down for the winter in their town house, where they were to be joined by the General.

Such was the arrangement. But "man proposes and" —you know the rest.

The autumn weather that had been glorious with the "excess of glory" in a genial, refulgent and prolonged Indian Summer, suddenly changed. The wedding-day dawned threateningly. No sun shone on it. Heavy black clouds darkened the sky; wild, mournful winds wailed through the woods; violent gusts of rain dashed suddenly down at intervals and as suddenly ceased.

The inmates of the old Hall watched the weather in hope and fear. Would it clear up? Or would it grow worse? they asked themselves and each other. Certainly there was no sign of its clearing; quite the contrary, for as the day declined the storm thickened.

Fires were kindled in every room of the old house. In the great drawing-room the two broad fireplaces, one at each end, were piled high with huge hickory logs, that were burning and blazing and filling the long room with glowing light and genial warmth, all the more comfortable and delightful in contrast to the tempestuous weather without—shining on the tall brass andirons and fender; shining on the polished oak floor, with its rich Turkey rugs laid before each fireplace and sofa; shining on the wainscoted walls with their time-honored family portraits; shining on the bright black walnut furniture; and on every surface and point that could reflect a ray of light.

This fine old-fashioned drawing-room was as yet vacant, waiting for the evening crowd of wedding guests, if indeed the state of the weather and the roads should permit them to assemble.

Fires were kindled in the long dining-room, where a sumptuous supper was laid out for the expected company; and in all the bed-chambers which had been opened and aired, cleaned and decorated for such of the guests as should come from a distance, and need to change their dress and perhaps to lie down and rest.

In one of the most spacious and comfortable of these upper-chambers, late in the afternoon of this day, sat the bride-elect.

She reclined in an easy-chair with her feet upon the fender and her eyes fixed moodily, dreamily upon the glowing fire before her, and listened to the beating storm without.

Here in this room, also, the ruddy blaze shone on dark wainscoted walls, relieved by crimson damask window-curtains, and on a polished oaken floor, bare of carpets, except for the rugs that lay upon the hearth, before the dressing-table, and beside the bed.

This was indeed a lonely, silent, somber scene in which to find a maiden on her bridal evening. The tempest

raged without, and the wind and rain beat against the walls and windows as if they would batter them down. In the pauses of the storm she could hear the rushing of the swollen torrents and the roaring of the rising river. She knew that the roads must be almost impassable and the streams unfordable. In truth, no one had bargained for such weather on the wedding-day.

Of the hundred and fifty guests who had been invited, not one had yet appeared; not one of her bridesmaids; not the minister who was to perform the marriage ceremony: not even her bridegroom! And yet all these had been expected at an early hour of the afternoon.

Everything was ready for their reception and for the rites and festivals of the evening. Every nook and corner of the genial old home smiled its welcome in anticipation of the arrival of these expected guests; and yet not one of them came.

Nor, when she listened to the howling of the tempest without, could the young bride-elect wonder at their absence.

Her rich and varied wardrobe and her rare and costly jewels were all packed in half a dozen large traveling trunks that stood ready for removal outside her chamber door in the upper hall.

Her wedding-dress of rich white velvet, her large veil of fine lace, her wreath of orange-flowers, and all the accessories of her bridal costume lay out upon the bed. Yet she doubted that she should be called to wear them that night and she sat still gazing into the fire, listening to the storm and making no motion towards her toilet.

She looked a beautiful young creature as she sat there with her graceful form, her perfect features, her pure complexion, her soft blue eyes and pale yellow hair.

Of what was she dreaming as she sat gazing into the the fire, and heaving deep, heavy sighs? Surely not only of the storm and the trifling delay of her marriage, for she must have known that it could only be a question of a few hours, and that whoever might stay away, her bridegroom would certainly keep his appointment. What serious subject of thought had she? what *possible* subject of grief? Blest with youth, health and beauty, with high birth, great wealth and many accomplishments, about to

form the most brilliant marriage of the year, with a gentleman who seemed her equal in all respects, if not her superior in some, about to preside over the most splendid establishment in the city and the grandest old house in the country, and to reign everywhere a queen in society, what imaginable cause of discontent could she have?

Ah, friends! did ever any of these things, in themselves alone, satisfy the hunger of any human heart—make any living creature happy?

The darling daughter, the rich heiress, the beautiful bride elect, sat and sighed and gazed, and gazed and sighed as if her heart would break.

There were secrets in the life of this motherless girl unknown to her nearest relatives, unsuspected by her appointed bridegroom. Of that more hereafter.

She sat there without moving until dark afternoon deepened into black night, and the raging of the storm became terrific. How long she would have sat thus I do not know, for just as the little toy of a clock upon her mantlepiece chimed nine her door opened, and her own maid, Matty, entered the room.

"I told you not to bring lights until I should ring for them," said Miss Lyon, impatiently turning her head.

"I know, Miss Anna; I didn't bring no lights. I come to tell you how Marse Alexander has jus' arroved."

"He has come—and through all this storm?" exclaimed Anna in a startled voice.

"Yes, Miss, which old Marse as'ed if you was ready and sent me up to 'quire."

"I can be ready soon, Matty. But—has any one else come?"

"No, Miss."

"Not the minister?"

"The which, Miss?"

"The Reverend Doctor Barber."

"No, Miss."

"Then I don't see the use of my disturbing myself yet awhile. There can be no marriage without a minister," said the bride elect, with something very much like a sigh of relief.

"You may go, Matilda," she added to the girl, who still lingered at the door.

Matty vanished, and Miss Lyon resigned herself to her reverie.

A few minutes passed, and Matty reappeared.

"What now?" demanded the young lady.

"Please, Miss, ole Marse have sent Jacob, with the close carriage, to fetch the min's'er, and say he will be here in half an hour if you will get ready."

"Matty, where is your master?"

"In his study, Miss."

"Alone?"

"Yes, Miss."

"Where is Mr. Alexander?"

"He's gone up to his own room, Miss, to fix hisself."

"Very well," said the young lady, as she arose and left her chamber.

She passed up the broad upper hall that was now ruddy and cheerful with the light of many fires, that shone through the open doors of the waiting bedrooms, and she went straight to the little room with the bay window, at the front end, over the main entrance.

She opened the door and found her grandfather seated in his big arm-chair by his writing table, on which lay books, papers, pens, and so forth.

But the old gentleman was neither reading nor writing. He was simply sitting and waiting.

He was a very fine-looking old man, tall and stout, with a full face, noble features, fair complexion, and snow white hair and beard. He wore an evening dress of black broadcloth, with a white vest and white cravat. His white gloves lay beside him, ready for use.

"All alone, gran'pa?" inquired Anna, smiling.

"Yes, my pet—yes, my darling," said the old gentleman, rising and handing his granddaughter to a seat with as much courtesy as if she were a princess. "But why are you not dressed, Anna? It is late, very late."

"Oh, gran'pa, what an awful night for a wedding! And there is no one here, and no one likely to come."

"Yes, my dear, but it is the night appointed, and your bridegroom is in the house, and the minister will soon be here."

"Gran'pa," pleaded Anna, leaving her seat and coming and sitting on his knee, and putting her arm caressingly

around his neck—"dear gran'pa I cannot bear to be married under these evil auspices, without witnesses, without bridesmaids, and on a dark night and in a heavy storm. Why cannot the marriage be deferred until to-morrow morning? What difference can a few hours make? At least, what difference that is not very desirable? By to-morrow the storm will be over. The ceremony can be performed early in the morning. I can be married in my traveling dress. The supper will do for a breakfast. And we can start immediately upon our wedding tour. Say, gran'pa, may not the marriage be deferred until the morning? It is awful to be married in solitude, on a dark, stormy night. Say, dear gran'pa! *May* not the marriage be put off until the morning?"

"My dear, no; it cannot be."

"But—why not?"

"For many reasons. For one—Anna, I confess, old soldier as I am, to a little superstition on some subjects. This marriage has been already put off *twice*. If it should be put off a third time, it will never take place. A marriage thrice deferred never comes to pass. There, my child, go and dress. It is nine o'clock. You are two hours behind time. Alexander is nearly ready, and the minister will be here in a few minutes," said the old gentleman, rising and gently leading his favorite out of the room.

"'A marriage thrice deferred never comes to pass.' I wish I was sure of that, and could defer mine just *once* more," mused Anna, as she went back to her room. "And yet," she added, compunctiously, "that is unjust and ungrateful to Alexander. Poor Alick! I dare say, in all these years, he has never even dreamed of any other girl but me, while I—while I—Ah, Heaven have pity on us! Well, well, I will bury the past deep in forgetfulness, and I will try to make him a good wife."

When she reached her room she found Matty and Matty's mother, Marcy, who was her own old nurse, in attendance. The fire was mended, the hearth swept and the lamps lighted. The two on her dressing-table shone down upon an open casket of jewels that blazed with blinding radiance.

Anna went wearily up to look at them.

"Mars' Alick sent them in by his man, honey," said Aunt Jenny in explanation.

It was a splendid set of diamonds, consisting of ear-rings, breastpin, necklace and bracelets.

"You will wear them, honey, dough dare ain't anybody to see them?"

"Except the giver! Yes, auntie, I will wear them. Poor Alick!" sighed Anna, sitting down on her dressing-stool, and resigning herself into the hands of her attendants.

They went willingly to work. The task of arranging their mistress for her bridal was with them a labor of love.

Old Marcy standing behind the chair brushed and braided the beautiful hair. Young Matty on the floor, encased the dainty feet in silken hose and satin slippers. And then the beauty stood up and let them remove her wrapper and put on her robes and her wreath, and her veil. But with her own hands she clasped the diamond necklace around her throat and the diamond bracelets on her wrists, and put ear-rings in her ears, and the brooch upon her bosom.

And when her toilet was completed she looked, if looks were all, a very royal bride, fit to share a young monarch's throne.

She sat down again and said:

"Matty, you may go and tell your master that I am ready."

The girl left the room to take the message, but in the hall she ran against some one who seemed on his way to speak to the bride. And so she turned back to say:

"Miss Anna, here's Jack asking if he can have a word with you."

"Certainly. Tell the boy to come in," said the young lady.

The son of the coachman, one of the younger grooms, entered, hat in hand, bowing low.

"Well, my boy, what is it?" inquired his mistress.

"If you please, Miss, I telled her as she couldn't, and she said as she *must*, and I telled her as she shouldn't, and she said she *would*," replied Jake, rather incoherently.

"'Would?' what?—who? I don't understand you, boy."

"Her, Miss. I telled her she couldn't, nohow, but she 'lowed she *must*, anyhow. And I telled her she shouldn't then, there! and she 'lowed she *would*, so there!"

"Would what, Jake?"

"See you immediate, Miss."

"*Who* would see me?"

"Her, Miss."

"Who is she?"

"The young woman, which I think she is crazy, Miss, and not safe to be seed."

"Oh, dear! dear me, Jake, what young woman are you talking of?" said Miss Lyon, impatiently.

"Her as runned in out'n the storm, Miss, and said how she must see you; and I telled her she wasn't fit to be seed herself, being drippen wet, nor safe to be seed, being sort o' cracked, and—oh my laws! there she is now, a followed of me!" exclaimed the boy, breaking off in dismay, to stare with wide mouth and eyes at the opening door.

Miss Lyon turned her head in that direction, and saw standing there a slight, pale young creature, enveloped in a long gray cloak, with its hood drawn over her head and shading her face.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSELESS WANDERER AND THE BRIDE ELECT.

They whisper—sin a shade had cast,
Upon her youthful frame,
And scornful murmurs as she past
Were mingled with her name.

"She is not beautiful," they said,
I saw that she was more;
One of those women, women dread
Men fatally adore.—ANON.

AND the homeless wanderer through the wild winter-night, she who had called herself Anna Lyon, stood in the presence of the bride elect.

"Drusilla! Drusilla Sterling! Is it you! Is it really you! Oh, my poor child, how happy I am to see you!" exclaimed Miss Lyon, in the utmost surprise and delight, as she advanced with extended hands to welcome her unexpected guest.

Drusilla suffered her cold fingers to be clasped, and she raised her soft, appealing eyes to the young lady's face but she spoke no word in reply.

"Oh, my dear child, how sorrowful we have been for you! Why did you leave your home? Where have you been? What have you been doing? Where did you come from last? And how came you out on such an awful night? And oh, poor girl! in what a state you you have come back? Don't try to answer any of my questions yet! You must be warmed and fed first," said Miss Lyon, who in her excitement had hurried question upon question to the exhausted girl, and seeing that she could not answer, repented her own thoughtless vehemence, and turning to her servants, said:

"Marcy, take off her cloak and hang it up, and sit her down in that arm-chair before the fire, and remove her wet shoes. And, Jacob, go down-stairs and ask Mrs. Dill to send up a glass of hot port wine negus, and some warm, dry toast. And be quick about it!"

Jake hurried away to do his errand.

And the young wanderer permitted the old nurse to remove her cloak, and seat her in the chair before the fire, and take off her wet boots.

Marcy had not failed to see the fact that had also been apparent to the old woman at the toll-gate. And as she was passing out of the room with the wet cloak over her arm, and the wet shoes in her hand, she stopped and whispered to her young mistress:

"Lord pity her, poor thing, I'm right down sorry for her; but she is not fit to be in your presence, Miss Anna."

For an instant the pure and high-born maiden recoiled with a look of pain and horror; but then quickly recovering herself, she murmured:

"Hush, no more of that. Take those damp things from the room and hang them before one of the spare fires, Marcy"

And when the woman had gone, Miss Lyon walked up to the poor wanderer and laid her hand tenderly on her shoulder.

The little pale face turned itself around to hers. The soft pleading eyes were raised:

"Yes, Miss Lyon, that is well. Send all your women from the room, for I must speak with you alone," she murmured, in a voice vibrating with suppressed anguish.

"Speak to me, then, my child; and speak freely. No mother could listen to your story with more sympathy than I shall," said the heiress, drawing a chair to the fire and sitting down near the girl.

"You are not yet married? the ceremony has not yet been performed?" the wanderer inquired, looking wistfully at the bride.

"No, certainly not, or I should not be here; we are waiting for the minister. Did you want to see the pageantry, my child? If so, you can do so," said the bride-elect, smiling, as if to encourage her desponding protégée.

"*I* want to see it! No, Miss Lyon, I came here to-night to put a stop to it," exclaimed the girl.

"To put a stop to it! Drusilla, are you mad, my dear?" said Miss Lyon, in amazement.

"I wish I was! I should have no duties to do then! Oh, Miss Lyon!"

"Explain yourself, my dear Drusilla; for indeed I fear some great grief has distracted your mind."

"No, no; but oh, Miss Lyon, I am about to give you great pain as great almost as I suffer myself. Would I could suffer alone! Would I could suffer for both!" moaned Drusilla, in a voice full of woe, as she bowed her head upon her hands.

"Speak out; speak freely," said Miss Lyon, gravely.

"If I alone were concerned, I could be silent. If it were not to save one from crime and another from misery I could be silent."

"Nay now, nay now, you do alarm me, Drusilla! To the point, dear child! to the point!" urged Miss Lyon.

"You are thinking ill of me?" asked the girl, raising those meek prayerful eyes to the face of the young lady.

"No, Drusilla! No one can judge you with more leni-

ency than I shall, my poor, dear child. Do not fear to open your heart to me," said Miss Lyon.

"I have no cause to fear on my own account, lady. You said that you would judge me with leniency. You meant that you would judge me with charity. But I am not a subject of charity, Miss Lyon, I am a subject for justice," answered the girl, with gentle dignity.

"I am waiting to hear your communication, Drusilla, whenever you please to tell it to me," said Miss Lyon.

But at that moment the door was opened, and Matilda entered with a tray in her hand.

"If you please, Miss, ole Marse say how the carriage hasn't come back long o' the min'ser yet, and when he comes he will send and let you know," the maid announced.

"Very well, Matilda; what have you got covered up on that tray?" inquired Miss Lyon.

"Please, I overtook Jake, awkward fellow, tumbling upstairs with this in his hands, which he said he was ordered to fetch it up for some one as was with you, and took it away from him to fetch it myself, because if I hadn't, he'd have fallen down and broken all the glass and spilt all the wine," answered the girl, turning a wistful glance upon the stranger.

"Quite right! Put the tray on that little table, and set the table here by the fire, and leave the room," said Miss Lyon.

The maid obeyed orders.

When she was gone Miss Lyon uncovered the tray, and pressed the refreshments upon her visitor.

Drusilla eagerly drank the warm wine and water, but declined the dry toast.

"I have so much thirst all the time, but I cannot swallow a morsel of food, for it always chokes me!" she said, in explanation.

When the girl had emptied the glass, she seemed somewhat revived in strength, and Miss Lyon again suggested that she should make the communication she promised.

With a deep sigh, with her head bowed upon her bosom and her hands clasped upon her knees, the girl began the story of her short life and long sorrow.

But perhaps we had better tell it for her, because, for

one reason, she suppressed much that would have vindicated herself; since to have related it would have criminated another. We will, with even-handed justice, deal fairly by both.

CHAPTER IV.

A CHILD'S LOVE.

It is the olden story,
Yet 'tis ever new,
And whensoe'er it happens,
It breaks the heart in two.
—FROM THE GERMAN OF UNGER.

THE late Mrs. Chief Justice Lyon had been a notable manager. She had looked well to her household, utterly scorning the idea of entrusting her domestic affairs to the hands of any hired housekeeper, until the infirmities of age came upon her, and she could no longer rise early and sit up late, or go up and down-stairs a dozen times a day as she had been accustomed to do.

Then she advertised for a housekeeper, who was required to be the nonpareil of matrons and managers, and to furnish the most unquestionable of references.

She received, in reply, just thirty-three letters from applicants for the place. Thirty-two were read, and cast into the waste-paper basket, without even the honor of an answer.

The thirty-third was read and considered.

It came from a highly respectable woman, the widow of a poor Baptist minister. Her age, her character, her competency and her references were all unexceptionable —so much so that old Mrs. Lyon seemed to think that the Lord had created the Baptist minister's widow for the especial purpose of providing her with a housekeeper.

But there was a drawback.

The widow, Mrs. Sterling, had an "encumbrance," as a child is cruelly called—a little girl, aged six years, from whom she was unwilling to part. In mentioning this "item," Mrs. Sterling had said that, if allowed to bring her child, she would consent to come at half the salary offered by Mrs. Lyon.

The old lady pondered over the letter. She was very anxious to have the housekeeper, but she did not want the "encumbrance."

Finally, as she could not come to any decision unaided, she took up the letter and waddled off to the old judge's "study," where he kept his law books and documents, and where he read the newspapers, and smoked or dozed the greater part of the day, but where he never "studied" for an hour.

She sat down and read the letter to him, and then said:

"You see she is just exactly the sort of woman that I want—and a clergyman's widow, too—so respectable. If I were to advertise, and keep on advertising for a year, I might not meet with another so suitable."

"Well, then, engage her at once," said the Chief Justice with more promptness of decision than he had often brought to bear upon his law cases.

"Yes, but there's a difficulty."

"In what? Doesn't she like the terms?—Give her her own; you can afford it, if she suits you."

"She likes the terms well enough. Don't you see she offers to come at half what I give, if permitted to bring her child.,'

"Then where on earth is the difficulty? *I* don't see it."

"Why, about the child, Judge."

"Oh, the little girl. Well, let the woman bring her child; what possible objection can there be to that?"

"Yes, but she would be an encumbrance."

"On whom, I would like to know? Not on you, not on me, and certainly not on her mother. Nonsense, my dear, let the child come; never make a difficulty about that."

"But children are so troublesome——"

"Especially when they are not our own. Tut, tut, if you don't want the woman, don't take her; but if you do want her, take her, and let her bring her little one. Bless my soul alive, haven't we got five or six dogs, and seven or eight cats, and half a score of birds? and if one child can make a hundredth part of the noise that they do, I'm greatly mistaken."

"Yes, but children are not like them; children are always eating cake, or sucking toffy, and toddling about with nasty, sticky hands, laying hold of your skirts——"

"My dear, don't say mine; I don't wear any. Nonsense, Sukey, take the woman and risk the child. Or stay—I see light at last. Take her on trial with the child, and then, if it should prove a nuisance, get rid of it, or of both."

"That's just what I *can* do Thank you, Judge, you were always a wise counsellor," said Mrs. Lyon turning to leave the room.

"Don't know. But hark-ye, Sukey, my dear. No cutting down of the poor woman's salary on account of her 'encumbrance.' That is a reason for raising it, not for reducing it," called the judge after his retreating wife.

"Oh, I never intended to give her less than full pay," replied Mrs. Lyon, as she went to her room to answer her letter.

The result was the engagement of Mrs. Sterling, with her "encumbrance."

The widow and her child arrived one cold day in December, soon after the family were settled in their town house for the winter. She was the least in the world like the "poor widow" of poetry and fiction.

She was a little, wiry, muscular looking body, with no encumbrance of flesh, whatever she might have of family, for she was rather thin in form and face. She had a high color, black hair and black eyes. She was cheerful, active and enterprising. She wore no widow's weeds, because, she explained, it had been three years since she had lost her husband, and black was a bore, always catching dirt and showing all it caught, and making everybody gloomy. She wore serviceable browns and grays, or dark crimsons.

She entered upon her duties with great energy, and soon had the house in perfect order, and the domestic machinery moving like magic. It is needless to say that she gave great satisfaction to her employers.

"I do not know how I ever got along without her. I know I could not now," said Mrs. Lyon, adding, "I would rather have her, even with two children instead of one, than anybody else without any. And indeed the child is *not* a nuisance, after all."

No, the child was not a nuisance. And neither did she bear the slightest resemblance to her mother. She was a delicate little creature, with a pure, pale face; large, soft, gray eyes, and bright, silky, brown hair. She was very

quiet, thoughtful and industrious for such a mere infant. Her mother ruled her with the same rigid discipline with which she governed all the servants of the household committed to her charge.

The little one was never allowed to go out of doors except on Sunday, when she was taken by her mother to church, or sent by herself to Sunday-school. On all other days she was confined strictly to the housekeeper's room, where, after learning one lesson, doing one sum, and writing one copy, she was kept stitching patchwork quilts from morning till night.

The Chief Justice, who was an awful myth to the little girl, had never once set eyes on her.

But old Mrs. Lyon coming occasionally to the housekeeper's room to give some orders, would see the demure little creature sitting on her low stool in the corner of the hearth, and stitching soberly at her patchwork, and she would say to the mother:

"Mrs. Sterling, why don't you let that child run out into the garden and play in this fine, clear, frosty weather? The air would do her good."

"Well, I don't know, madam. You see how delicate she is; she might take cold."

"Delicate, and no wonder, Mrs. Sterling; kept mewed up in this close room at needlework all the time, as if she was sewing for her living—a babe of six years old! If you are afraid to let her go into the garden, let her run about the house; don't keep her here always."

"Thank you, madam; but I cannot let her do so. She might grow troublesome; and, besides, she *will* have to sew for a living some day or other if she doesn't do it now. She can't have me always to look to; she will have to take care of herself, and so she must learn to be patient and industrious by times."

"Poor little thing," murmured the old lady.

"Don't pity her, if you please, madam, or put into her head that she is ill-used, for she isn't. I do everything for her good, and it's not likely that I would do anything else, for I am her own mother," said the housekeeper, repectfully but firmly.

"I don't believe you know what is for her good, and if you are her own mother you treat her worse than any step-

mother would," the old lady thought and would have said, only that she was a little afraid of Mrs. Sterling.

"She isn't the least like you. Who is she like?" inquired Mrs. Lyon.

"Her father. See, here is his miniature," said the widow, drawing from her pocket a morocco case, and handing it to the old lady.

"Yes, she is like her father. What a very interesting face he has. Has he been dead long?"

"Three years last March; he died of consumption. I suppose she will go the same way," said the widow, indicating her child.

"You should not let her hear you say so; if she gets the impression that she is to die of consumption because her father did she will probably do so," whispered Mrs. Lyon. Then aloud she spoke this truth: "Nobody need die of consumption or of anything else except old age, unless they have a mind to. Plenty of good food and proper clothing, and out-door exercise will prevent consumption."

And with a parting glance of pity at the pale child, the old lady left the room.

"You mustn't mind what Mrs. Lyon says; she is not like us. She is a great lady, and thinks of nothing but taking her ease and indulging herself, and she fancies that *we* can do the same; but you know we can't," said the widow applying the antidote to what she considered the poison that had been dropped into the child's mind. "We must deny ourselves, and bear our burden, and after all it is easy enough to do."

"Yes," said the mite in the corner, repeating her Sunday-school Scripture text, "for our Saviour said, 'Whosoever will come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.'"

"Yes, and if you don't do it you know you will be eternally lost," said the clergyman's widow.

"Oh, but our Saviour will never let me be lost, no, never; I know that much."

"How do you know that? If you disobey him you will be lost."

"Oh, no! He will not let me be—no, never, not even if I was to steal away from my work and go and play in the garden. He would forgive me like he did Peter; and

then I should feel sorry, and cry, and then he would make it all right again," said the quaint little infant Theologian with an air of positive conviction.

"Child! where did you learn such bad doctrines? Not at Sunday-school, I know," said the widow, in dismay.

"Yes, I did, in the Sunday-school, in the Bible texts, and they are good. Our Saviour was good and all that He did was good. Don't He say that He was sent to seek and to save them that were *lost?* And I know He will never let me be lost, no, nor the old lady neither, even if she does take her ease, because she is so good-hearted."

"Miss, don't you know it is wrong to contradict your mother? And you have contradicted me several times."

"Yes, I know—but—I must say what is true about Our Saviour when we talk of Him."

"Well, you shall sew one hour longer this evening, as a punishment for your disrespect to me."

"Well, mamma, I will sew all day and all night, if that will do you any good, so you will let me say what is true about our Saviour. Sewing is easy enough, the dear knows—easier than being scourged and stoned, and all that, like some of His poor friends were for His sake," said the child, as she carefully fitted the little squares of her patchwork together.

"Only six years old and to talk like that! She is one of the children who are doomed to die early," thought Mrs. Sterling.

And indeed any one looking at that child, with her delicate frame, large brain and active intellect, must have come to the same conclusion. But they would every one have been mistaken. There was a wonderful vitality and power of endurance in that little slight nervous frame. No one is faultless. And if this little atom had a fault, it was that of being just a "wee bit" self-opinionated. She was a very promising pupil in a very orthodox Sunday-school; yet from the very texts they had taught her she had received impressions that the teachers certainly never had intended to give her, and these impressions had become convictions in defense of which she was willing at six years to suffer the baby martydom of—"sewing all day and all night."

Meanwhile the Christmas Holidays were approaching, and the young son of the house was coming home to spend them. And his uncle and cousin were invited to meet him. Great preparations were made to entertain the party. Old Mrs. Lyon's visits to the housekeeper's room became more and more frequent as the time for the arrival of the visitors drew near.

And whenever the old lady came, she inevitably found the quiet child sitting on her stool in the corner of the hearth sewing for dear life.

But old Mrs. Lyon took no farther notice of the infant. Partly because she was too full of her own affairs and partly because she was displeased by the housekeeper's disregard of her advice.

But the demure child, listening to every word that passed, with the interest only a recluse could feel, heard a great deal about "Mr. Alexander." Whoever else might be coming, it was for this darling only son that his mother planned. It was of his comfort and pleasure only that she thought and talked.

And the little listening child grew to look upon "Mr. Alexander" as some young king of Israel—some splendid and magnificent Saul, or Solomon, who was to be the glory of the house. And because hero-worshiping was a necessity of her deep, earnest, reverent soul, she began to worship him.

At length, two or three days before Christmas, the expected visitors began to arrive.

First came General Lyon, the fine, martial-looking old man with his commanding form and snow-white hair and beard; and his granddaughter, the beautiful Anna Lyon, then a fair, blooming, blue-eyed and golden-haired hoyden of twelve years of age; both attended by their servants. And next came Mr. Alexander, then a rollicking young man of eighteen.

The whole party was assembled in the drawing-room, and Mrs. Sterling happened to be with them when Mr. Alexander was announced and entered, in a great noisy bustle of joy.

He shook hands heartily with his father and then with his uncle; and he embraced his mother and his cousin, and then, before he knew what he was about, he threw

his arms around the housekeeper and hugged and kissed her.

"Oh, see here! you know I didn't mean it, I didn't indeed, ma'am; I beg ten thousands pardons! but I am so much in the habit of kissing everybody I meet here that—that—I kissed you by mistake. But if you don't mind it *I* don't; or if you feel aggrieved, why, you may kiss and hug *me*, and that will make it all square between us," laughed the boy, when he discovered his error.

The clergyman's widow curtsied very stiffly without moving a muscle of her face.

"This is Mrs. Sterling, who manages our house, Alick," said his mother, gravely.

"Mrs. Sterling, I am very happy to have the honor of knowing you, and I am persuaded that the house is managed to perfection," said the young man, bowing.

The widow curtsied more stiffly than before, and then withdrew from the room.

"I say, Anna, I wouldn't kiss her again for the best hunter in your father's stables; my lips got frost-bitten by that first encounter," whispered the young man, with a smile, to his cousin.

"Served you right, Alick. You should look before you leap," laughed Anna.

"That mightn't always prevent my leaping, especially if the feat seemed a dangerous one, though it would have done so in this case, I admit.

They were interrupted by the arrival of another guest—an uninvited and unexpected, if not an unwelcome one.

The door was opened by a servant, who grimly announced:

"Mr. Richard Hammond."

And "Poor Dick," the black sheep of the flock, entered the room, looking rather sheepish, it must be confessed.

And yet he was a very handsome and gentlemanly youth, tall, slender, with a fine Grecian profile, with a clear brown complexion, black curling hair and dark changing eyes—with a frank countenance and an engaging smile that few, or none, could resist.

But well he might look sheepish, poor outlawed fellow, for his entrance cast an instantaneous chill over the family circle.

General Lyon drew himself up haughtily. The Chief Justice looked grave his wife sad, and their son angry. Only Anna seemed pleased. And not only pleased, but delighted. For the instant she saw him she bounced up, overturning two or three chairs in her hurry and rushed to meet him, exclaiming:

"Cousin Dick! Oh, dear Cousin Dick, I am so glad you've come! It would have been such a dull Christmas, indeed no Christmas at all, without you!"

And she gave him both her hands and pressed and shook his, and drew him towards the group, and first instinctively presented him to the kind-hearted old lady:

"Aunt Lyon, here is Cousin Dick. Are you not very glad to see him?"

"How do you do, Richard?" said the old lady, offering her hand.

And the black sheep stooped and kissed her.

"Uncle, here's Dick. Isn't it a pleasant surprise?" asked Anna.

And uncle had to come and shake the scapegrace by the hand.

"Grandpa, look here; you don't see Dick. Here's Dick waiting to speak to you!" she persisted.

And General Lyon had to turn and meet the engaging smile of the handsome boy.

"Alick," said Anna, in a low whisper, giving her betrothed a sharp dig in the ribs with her elbow, and a very vicious look from her angry blue eyes, "if you don't stop glowering, and come and speak to Dick, I'll never speak to *you* again."

"Anything to keep peace in the family," laughed Mr. Alexander, as he cleared up his brow, and went and welcomed the new-comer.

And in two minutes more Dick was seated in the circle around the fire, the life of the little company, talking and laughing, telling jokes and singing songs, and keeping everybody pleased and amused, so that they forgot they did not want him, and almost fancied that they could not do without him.

There was nothing very wrong about Dick Hammond. It is true that he was a very unpromising law student, being rather idle and extravagant—fonder of play than of

work, and loving his "friends" better than himself. You know the sort of man—one of that sort of whom it is always said that he is "nobody's enemy but his own."

Dick had a neat little patrimony, but his relations said that he was in a fair way of making "ducks and drakes" of it and they discountenanced and disapproved of him accordingly.

His one fast friend was his cousin Anna, and every year she was growing to be a stronger and more important one.

At ten o'clock that night, Mr Richard Hammond made a motion to go, but the Chief Justice said:

"Stay all night, Dick." And old Mrs. Lyon added:

"Stay and spend the Christmas holidays with us, Dick."

So Mr. Richard stayed, and sent for his portmanteau from the hotel where he had stopped on his first coming to the city.

And having the freedom of the house, he took more liberties in it than any one else would dare to do—going into any part of it, and at any hour he pleased; popping in and out of the Chief Justice's secluded study, and breaking up his naps; popping in and out of the old lady's sacred dressing-room, and startling her in the midst of the mysterious rites of the toilet; and bouncing in and out of the housekeeper's room, the pantry or the kitchen, to the serious discomfiture of the manager, the butler and the cook.

Yet everybody loved Dick, so long as the influence of his frank manners, snnny smile, and sweet voice was upon them. But when that was withdrawn, and they were left to their sober reason, they strongly disapproved of him.

"Little pitchers have long ears and wide mouths," says the proverb. And the little pitcher in Mrs. Sterling's private apartment was no exception to the general rule. Sitting stitching at her patchwork, she often heard Mr. Richard's shortcomings discussed, and she pitied him, for she thought that he had wandered away very far from the fold, and was in a very bad way indeed.

One day when poor Dick popped into the housekeeper's room, to ask for some brandy and salt to dip the wick of

his candles in, to make "corpse lights" for ghosts to carry, and scare the maids with, he found no one there but the child, sitting in the corner and stitching patchwork as usual.

She looked up at him solemnly, and nearly annihilated him with the following appalling question:

"Young man, are you one of the lost sheep of the House of Israel?"

"Eh?" exclaimed Dick, starting.

"I ask you, are you a lost sheep? They say you are a black sheep, and I believe it is the black sheep that go astray," she said, gravely, and folding her hands and contemplating him.

Dick burst out laughing, but when he recovered himself he answered very gravely:

"Indeed, I fear I am a lost sheep, little girl."

"Well, that is bad, but don't be frightened. Our Saviour knows where you are, and He will be sure to find you, and fetch you into the fold. Because, you know, He came to seek and to save those that are lost. And what he came to do He *will* do, and nothing in this world can prevent him."

"I'll be shot if that isn't an encouraging doctrine if it is a true one, little girl. I sometimes wish somebody *would* find me and fetch me into a place of safety; but I fear I shouldn't be worth keeping when found, for I am a sad, foolish, naughty sheep, child," said the young man, with a self-mocking laugh.

"Never mind, don't make game of yourself. If our Saviour thinks you worth looking for, you are too good to be laughed at; and when He does find you and fetch you into the fold, He will make as good a sheep of you as—as—as—" The child seemed at a loss for a comparison, until her face suddenly lighted up, and she said: "As Mr. Alexander himself!"

"As Mr. Alexander himself! Oh, my eye! catch me, somebody! Only there's nobody to do it!" said Dick, rolling up against the wall and holding his sides.

"What's the matter? Have you got the stomach-ache? There's some rum and molasses in the cupboard," said the child.

"No, oh no!" cried Dick, bursting into vociferous

laughter. "You are the solemnest little quiz! To hold up Mr. Alexander as a model for me! Well! I'm bad enough, goodness knows, but—! Why, little one, Mr. Alexander isn't a sheep at all, either good or bad! He's a goat, a rank black goat, and never has been in the fold, and never would be let into it!"

"Sir, it is very wrong in you to speak ill of a gentleman so in his absence," gravely asserted the little monitor.

"So it is; you are right there, little girl," admitted the scapegrace.

And the timely entrance of Mrs. Sterling put an end to this strange interview, and possibly saved the young man a serious lecture from the little child.

Dick got his candles, brandy and salt, and whatever else he wanted of the housekeeper; for that strong-minded woman, no more than her weaker sisters and brethren, could resist Dick's irresistible smile."

CHAPTER V.

THE CHILD MEETS HER FATE.

"The sun himself is coming up this way."

That night "a most horrid specter," wrapped in a long winding sheet, and bearing a corpse candle that cast a cadaverous color over his countenance, stalked through the lower regions of the house, frightening the maids, and the men too, for that matter, from their propriety, and rising such a row in the dignified residence of the Chief Justice as might have brought the police down upon any house of a less assured standing.

And upon an investigation of the matter next morning, Mr. Richard was discovered to be at the bottom of the business.

And the quiet little girl in the housekeeper's room heard again of his delinquencies and pitied him and wished that he was more like Mr. Alexander, that splendid paragon of youth whom his mother was always praising. The child, closely confined to her mother's chamber,

had never seen the hero of her admiration. But the hour was near at hand when she was to meet him in an interview destined to determine the whole course of her future life.

It was on Christmas Eve. All the preparations for the Christmas festival were made. The turkeys were already killed and dressed for the roaster; the hams were in soak; the plum pudding was mixed; the pies and cakes baked; and all the materials for the egg-nogg and apple-toddy laid out on the pantry table; and the notable housekeeper might have taken her ease but for one thing.

There was to be a pantomime at the city theaters that evening. And the three young people were to go. And as there were no reserved seats, they were to go very early in order to secure good places, for it was foreseen that the house would be very much crowded. And thus dinner was ordered two hours earlier than usual, so that they might get off in time.

Mrs. Sterling, having finished her morning's work, was putting off her working gown of brown alpaca to put on a nice dress of black silk in honor of Christmas Eve, when old Mrs. Lyon came in to give the instructions about the dinner, and having given them, immediately left the room,

The housekeeper was in no plight to go all the way down to the kitchen, so she sent the child to tell the cook to come up to her for orders.

The little one went and delivered her message faithfully; and was returning to her mother's room, when, in passing through the back hall, she suddenly met the god of her infant idolatry face to face. She knew him at once, either by instinct or because there was no other young man beside Mr. Richard (whom she knew by sight) in the house. She backed up into a corner to let him pass.

"Heyday! Who have we here? A child in the house? I haven't seen such a thing here for years! Or are you a fairy changeling?" inquired Mr. Alexander, in surprise.

The child did not reply, but—I am sorry to say—put her finger in her mouth, dropped her chin and rolled up her eyes in a shy glance at the splendid youth.

"Ah bah! that's very nasty! Don't stick your finger

in your mouth and stare, but hold up your head and answer when you are spoken to. Tell me who you are, little girl!" said Mr. Alexander.

Prince Solomon had condescended to issue orders and they were immediately obeyed by his loyal subject. Down went the little finger; up went the little face, and she answered:

"I am Mrs. Sterling's little girl."

"And a very nice little girl, too, to do as you are bid. Always do so, do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"And so you are the housekeeper's daughter?"

"Yes, sir."

"How is it that I haven't seen anything of you before?"

"Because mother never lets me go out of her room."

"Never lets you go out of her room?"

"No, sir."

"Why?"

"Because she is afraid that the—" Here the child lowered her voice to a tone of mysterious awe—"*Chief Justice* would be angry if he saw me about."

"Bosh about his being angry! He is not a King Herod to hate the sight of a child, or desire the death of the innocents. You don't mean to tell me that you are cooped up in the housekeeper's room all the time?"

"Oh no, sir, I am not cooped up anywhere any of the time; only the poultry for Christmas was cooped up, and that was in the back yard; I saw them through the window. But I sit on a nice little stool in mother's room and sew pretty quilt pieces."

"All day long?"

"Yes, sir."

"And every day?"

"Oh, no sir, not every day. I go to Sunday-school on Sundays."

"But on all other days you are kept confined to that room all day long?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you look just as if you were, you poor little pale thing, and that is the truth. It is horrid. I'll speak to my mother about it. Why, you ought to be romping all over the house, you know, and going to pantomimes on

Christmas, like other children. Say, little a—a—What is your name?"

"Anna Drusilla Sterling, sir," said the child, beginning to grow restive under all this questioning, and to swing her shoulders from side to side, after the manner of some children when saying their lessons.

"There—don't do that; it's ugly," said Mr. Alexander. And the swinging instantly ceased.

"'Anna Drusilla Sterling?' Well I have one Anna already, so I shall call you Drusilla," said the young man.

"But my mother calls me Anny."

"Never mind what your mother calls you—I shall call you Drusilla. Well, little Drusilla, wouldn't you like to go to the pantomime with us to-night?"

"I don't know, sir. Please, what is it?"

"It is something got up to amuse little children like you, though big children like myself find it equally diverting. Wouldn't you like to go? I should like to take you, and to see it through your great staring eyes, as well as through my own. It would be a new sensation. Come, what do you say?"

"Thank you, sir. Is it pretty?"

"Beautiful!"

"And good?"

"It is heavenly!"

"Then I think I should like to go, sir, if mother will let me."

"Oh, she will let you fast enough, for I shall make a point of it."

"What did you call it, sir, please?"

"A pantomime."

"Oh, I know now," said the child, with a sudden look of bright intelligence; "it is something about Moses and the children of Israel, isn't it, sir?"

"Eh? 'Moses and the children of Israel?' What put that into your little noddle?" laughed the young man.

"Why, sir, you know the books of Moses are called the panta—panta—something; it's a very hard word, sir."

"Oh, you are talking of the pentateuch?"

"Yes, sir, a very hard word. I always miss it at the class, it is so very hard."

"Very," laughed the young man.

And now, as the voice of the housekeeper was heard calling her child, the little girl made her Sunday-school curtsey and ran away from her new friend to join her mother.

Mr. Alexander gazed after her as he might if she had been sixteen instead of six, for he was fond of children, as well as of kittens and puppies, and all small creatures. They amused him. He was now determined that this quaint little child should go to the pantomime with himself and his friends, for he knew perfectly well that to watch *her*, and witness *her* wonder and delight, would be as diverting as to see the play itself—it would, in that way double his own entertainment.

Mr. Aleck was benevolent, but not very scrupulous, I regret to confess. So, when he went to the housekeeper's room to ask leave take the child to the pantomime, judging that the Baptist preacher's widow would set her face against all such exhibitions, he took a hint from the child's mistake, and was so unprincipled as to persuade that pious matron that the spectacle in question was a historical affair illustrative of the Israelites, and very instructive and edifying to the youthful mind. And so, with Mr. Richard to back him he talked the housekeeper into consenting that her child should accompany them, especially as Miss Anna was to be one of the party. And Mrs. Sterling began to dress little Drusilla—we shall call the child by her second name, for the same season that Mr. Alexander did, to distinguish her from the other Anna.

Immediately after dinner the young party set out, and reached the theater in time to get good front seats.

The pantomime was "Jack the Giant Killer." But as Mr. Alexander kept little Drusilla beside himself, and kept the play bill in his own hands, he found it easy to persuade the simple child that the exhibition was of "David and Goliath," Jack was David, and Jack's first giant was Goliath.

And the child was exceedingly edified, as well as highly entertained.

Mr. Alexander found it "as good as a play," and much better than a pantomime, to watch her. Her credulity was equal to her delight, and both were unbounded. But

she thought it was not exactly like the Scripture story, after all.

Mr. Alexander explained to her that they could not make it exactly like, because things were so different now to what they were then.

Little Drusilla accepted the explanation in full faith, saying in her solemn way, that she supposed they did the best they could, and that we must "take the will for the deed."

The pantomime was over a little after ten o'clock, and the youthful party returned home.

Little Drusilla, restored to her mother's charge, would have rehearsed for her benefit all the great spectacle of "David and Goliath," but that the good lady told her that it was time for her to be asleep, and made her go immediately to bed.

Notwithstanding the late hour at which the young people had retired on Christmas Eve, they were all up by times on Christmas day. All was lively bustle throughout the house. Everybody had Christmas gifts, at which each pretended to be as much surprised as he or she was expected to be.

Miss Anna had a little set of diamonds, consisting of ear-rings and brooch, presented by her grandfather; an ermine-tippet and muff from her uncle; a set of antique lace from her aunt; a diamond bracelet from her betrothed and from scapegrace Dick a real King Charles lap dog which she openly preferred to all her other presents, because she said it was alive, and could give love for love.

The old lady had a new patent easy-chair, a new pair of gold spectacles, and a set of sables.

And the gentlemen of the party were overwhelmed with embroidered slippers, smoking-caps, dressing-gowns, pen-wipers, and so forth.

The housekeeper was presented with a new brown silk dress. And there was not a servant in the house but received a present.

"And who has got anything for little Drusilla?" inquired Mr. Alexander.

But nobody answered him.

"Well, I'm dashed! Only one bit of a baby in the house, and nobody has thought of her. And this especially a

child's festival, because it celebrates the birth of the Divine Child, who also loved little children! Say, mother, the shops are open in the city this morning, are they not?" inquired Mr. Alexander.

"Until ten o'clock, Alick; not after," replied the old lady.

"All right, it is only eight now—plenty of time. I'm off; but I'll be back to breakfast," said Mr. Alexander darting out of the drawing-room, seizing his hat in the hall and rushing from the house.

"Ah, what a kind heart has this child of our old age, John!" said the old lady, turning proudly and fondly to her husband.

"Yes—yes; a good boy—a good boy," answered the Chief Justice.

"Ah, Anna, my dear, you will be a happy woman if you live long enough, for you will have a good husband," she continued, turning to her intended daughter-in-law

Anna shrugged her shoulders.

"You don't seem to agree with me, Anna."

"Oh yes, I do, Aunt Lyon, to some extent. I think Alick is really very kind when it amuses him; but I don't think he would be kind to any living creature when it would bore him to be so. For instance, he would bring me home a present, and be really delighted with my delight in it; but he wouldn't give up a skating party to take me to a wax-work show if I were to cry myself ill from disappointment."

"Oh, I suppose you have had a tiff with him; that's of no consequence at all. 'The quarrel of lovers is the renewal of love,'" said the old lady, laughing to herself.

But Anna had had no tiff with her betrothed, and her judgment of him was a righteous one.

Mr. Alick soon came rushing in with his arms full of packages, and looking like a railway porter. He set down three large ones on the floor, threw himself into a chair and exclaimed:

"Now then, mother, send for little Drusilla. It will be fun to watch her eyes when she sees these things."

Mrs Lyon rang the bell, and sent a servant to fetch the little girl to the drawing-room.

The child's mother being in a particularly good

humor since receiving the new brown silk dress, made no objection, but sent her along in charge of the servant.

Little Drusilla entered the drawing-room, looking very pretty in her new red merino frock, which suited well with her dark hair and dark eyes, and clear, pale face.

She made her little curtsey at the door, and then as Mr. Alexander held out his arms she ran straight up to him.

"Now, then," said the young gentleman, taking her on his knee, while the mysterious packages lay all around his feet, "if you could have your wish, what would you wish for?"

"Mother says it is foolish and wicked to wish for anything, because if it is for our good, the Lord will give it to us whether or not."

"Well, but suppose you were so foolish and wicked as to wish for anything, what would it be?" persisted the young man, while all the other members of the Christmas party looked on, smilingly.

The child pondered gravely.

"Come—what would it be?"

"I think a work-box," answered the child, looking up at length.

"What! not a doll-baby?"

"Oh, I would rather have a doll-baby, but I thought it would be *too* wicked to wish for that, because it is useless," said the little one.

"Well, look here, now! First, here's the doll-baby," said Mr. Alick, unwrapping one of the parcels, and taking from a mass of tissue paper a splendid wax doll, with rosy cheeks, blue eyes and golden hair, all dressed in blue satin and white lace.

"Oh-h-h! my-y-y!" exclaimed the child, in breathless delight, as she took the doll and held it up before her, and gazed at it with ever-widening eyes.

Mr. Alexander laughed and squeezed her, he so much enjoyed her enjoyment, and the whole party looked on, amused and interested.

"Isn't it a beauty?" asked the youth, giving the child another squeeze.

"It is a love! it is a darling! it is as pretty as—as—as Miss Anna!" she exclaimed, turning her eyes from the golden-haired doll to the golden-haired girl.

"Thank you, little one! That compliment is sincere, however flattering," laughed the heiress.

"And now look here!" said Mr. Alexander, taking up another parcel; "she is wearing her ball dress, you know, which is very proper for Christmas, but would never do for every day. And a thrifty little woman like you would never let her doll wear her best clothes for common; so you must fit her out with a wardrobe, and here are the goods to do it with."

And he unrolled a second parcel, and displayed a yard each of pink, blue and buff cambric, and several yards of white muslin, and some remnants of ribbon and lace.

"And now," he said, as the child was contemplating these additional treasures with increased delight, "now you will require something to make them up with, won't you?"

"Oh, no; I mustn't wish for anything more. This is too much!" said the little one, with eyes dancing for joy.

"Except what you wished for first of all, which I think was something like this," said Mr. Alexander, opening a third parcel, and producing a pretty little work-box fitted out with scissors, thimbles, needles, thread, and every requisite for sewing.

"Oh, how much I do thank you, sir. Once before I dreamt I had pretty things like these all to myself and I was sorry I ever woke up. Do you think I'll wake up this time, sir?" inquired the little girl, evidently perplexed between delight and dismay.

Mr. Alexander laughed, and intensely enjoyed the pastime that he had purchased at so small an outlay, but the old lady said, very gravely:

"You have bewildered the child, Alick. She is not used to presents, and you should have treated her upon the same principle as that upon which the doctors treat their patients, who have been suffering from a long starvation, and given her but a little at a time. And now put her off your knee and come to breakfast; or if you can't part with her, bring her along."

Mr. Alexander immediately put the little creature down, and told her to take up her treasures and run away with them to her mother as fast as she could.

Mr. Alexander could give the child presents and divert himself with her delight in them, but he could not consent to be bothered with her at the breakfast table, where he wished to give "his whole mind" to the business there to be on hand.

His mother, more considerate, touched the bell, and told the servant who answered it to help the child to carry her presents to the housekeeper's room.

The man gathered the parcels up and took Drusilla by the hand; but as he led her from the room she suddenly looked back, impulsively broke away from her guard, and ran up to her benefactor and took his hand and kissed it.

"Why, what a grateful little imp you are, to be sure! It is worth while trying to please *you;* one succeeds so well and one's efforts are appreciated and thanked," said the young man, raising the child in his arms and kissing her, and then darting a half-merry, half-reproachful glance at his cousin Anna.

"If you meant that for *me*, Mr. Alick, I don't see the point of it. You never do anything to please *me*, unless it still better pleases yourself. You are one of the sort of folk who would carelessly fling a dollar to a strange beggar but would not lose an hour's rest by the bedside of a sick friend," said plain-spoken Anna.

"Well, there's somebody that will do both," said Mr. Alexander, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of Dick. "He sat up with old Jerry Brown, who had the smallpox. I wonder if you would have liked him so well, Anna, if he had taken it; as he might have done; and lost his hair and eyebrows and been otherwise badly marked?"

"Yes I would, Alick! But, thank goodness, Dick, darling, you didn't get it, and you are not marked; but just as good-looking as ever," said Anna, defiantly.

"Come, come, this is pretty quarrelling among cousins on Christmas morning, too! Put a stop to it," said Mrs. Lyon.

The young people laughed and obeyed. They were only "sparring." And they all sat down to the breakfast-table in a high, good humor.

And little Drusilla went back to her mother, as happy as it was possible for a child to be. And her happiness

was all associated with the idea of Mr. Alexander, that splendid being who had been the central object of all her wonder, curiosity and admiration, long before she had set eyes on him. She had never dreamed of such bliss as she now enjoyed, and all through him!

Up to this time her little life had been dreary enough, more dreary than even she knew since she had known nothing better with which to compare it. Her very earliest recollections were of her father's sick-room, and his long and painful illness; and then came his death, and her mother's sorrow and their poverty: and finally, this situation in the family of the Chief Justice, where the child had been led to believe that her presence could be only tolerated for the sake of her mother's valuable services, and upon condition of herself being kept out of sight and hearing of the family.

All these were very miserable and gloomy antecedents; but now they had passed away like the shadows of the night; for now came this bright, young Mr. Alexander, to bring daylight and sunshine into her infant life.

His kindness to the pale orphan did not cease with Christmas Day. So long as the Christmas and New-Year's holidays lasted, Mr. Alick insisted on little Drusilla sharing all the young people's amusements; because, in point of fact, it greatly enhanced his enjoyment to have her with them.

When the holidays were over, General Lyon took his granddaughter back to school; Mr. Alexander returned to college; and the house was emptied of its visitors.

In taking leave of his pet, Mr. Alick had said:

"And now, Drusilla, when I am gone you must be my mother's little girl, do you hear?"

"Oh, how I wish I might! Oh, how I *do* wish I might!" said the child, weeping and clinging to her friend.

"Mother, when I am gone, you'll be good to the poor little thing, if only for my sake, won't you?" he inquired, as a feeling of real pity moved his heart.

"Indeed I will, Alick," earnestly replied the old lady.

"And you will not let old Bishop Sterling keep her mewed up in that horrid room all the time?"

"Not if I can prevent it, Alick."

With this promise Mr. Alick departed.

And little Drusilla clung to the old lady's skirts, and wept as if her heart would break.

For her the day had departed with the sun that had made its light, and the darkness of the night had come again.

You may depend upon it that the old lady sincerely sympathized with the child who wept for *her* son's departure, and so she petted little Drusilla, and took her out that day, when she went in the carriage to purchase some articles that were needed in the housekeeping.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

When she commenced to love she could not say.
Ere she began to tire of childish play.—WORDSWORTH.

THE little girl grew to be a great favorite with the old lady; first, for her beloved and only son's sake.

"Poor Alick was so fond of the child," she said; though why she called the gay and prosperous young collegian. "poor," only aged mothers can tell.

Afterwards she loved the little one for its own sake.

"The child is such a quiet little creature," she said, "and so intelligent and obliging."

Little Drusilla had the freedom of the house. When her tasks were over in the housekeeper's room she might wander where she would, and was tolerated like a pet kitten.

She would creep into the old lady's sitting-room, and nestle down at her feet, ready to hold a skein of silk for her to wind; to pick up her scissors when she should drop them; to ring the bell for a servant, or to do anything else that her little hands and willing mind could accomplish.

And so it came to pass that she became useful and even necessary to her benefactress.

"You have no idea how many steps about my room the little creature saves me," said Mrs. Lyon to the child's mother.

"I am very glad to hear it, madam; it is her duty to make herself useful," replied the housekeeper.

"And then she is so much company."

"I hope she knows her place, madam, and is not pert."

"She is a little dear, and I would not be without her for anything; so don't be troubled."

"I trust in you, madam, to send her away whenever she becomes annoying to you."

"Quite right; when she becomes annoying I shall do so," laughed the old lady.

Whenever Mrs. Lyon got letters from Mr. Alexander she read them to little Drusilla; and in no one could she have found a more attentive, intelligent and sympathizing listener. In almost every letter the young gentleman wrote:

"Give my love to my little pet, and kiss her for me," or words to that effect.

Whenever Mrs. Lyon wrote to Mr. Alexander she would smilingly ask the child what message she had to send: and little Drusilla would answer:

"Please say I send him a love and a kiss; and I ask our Father to bless him whenever I say my prayers."

And the message would be faithfully transmitted.

Sometimes when Mrs. Lyon chanced to be out of her room the little girl would creep to the door of Judge Lyon's study, and peep shyly in.

And whether the old lady happened to be there or not the old gentleman would call the child in, and pat her head, and talk to her, and feel in all his pockets for stray pennies to give her.

Little Drusilla had but one use for pennies—"to drop in the purse" that was carried around on Sundays in the Sunday-school.

Mrs. Sterling, seeing how really welcome her child was, "in hall and bower," no longer tried to keep her confined to the housekeeper's room.

So the winter passed away, and the spring opened.

Early in the season the family, with their whole establishment of servants, migrated to Crowood, the fine old country-seat of the Chief Justice, situated in the dense forest-land of the valley. Of course Mrs. Sterling and her child went along with them.

Among woods, fields, and streams, birds, shrubs and flowers, little Drusilla seemed in her native element, and with her fellow-creatures. Her enjoyment of nature was intense and her delight unbounded. Her joy overflowed and communicated itself to every one in the family. Even the old Justice said:

"The child makes me long to have my grandchildren about my knees; for, after all, this little one isn't ours."

"Well, if she isn't she's a pet of poor Alick's, and that makes *me* think a deal, of her," answered Mrs. Lyon.

The old lady was a great floraculturist, and had one of the most beautiful flower-gardens in the country. It was her pleasure to tend it herself; and she passed much of her time in dibbling and digging, weeding and watering, planting and transplanting her favorite specimens.

And on these occasions the child was always at her heels, with little spade, rake, hoe, watering-pot, or guano basket; and she soon learned to know the name, and watch the growth of every variety of flower as well and as carefully as her benefactress could.

Mrs. Lyon was also a poultry fancier, and had some of the finest broods in the neighborhood. Moreover, she chose to look after her hen-roosts and nests in person.

And whenever she visited her poultry-yard for this purpose little Drusilla would walk behind her with a basket, which she would carry full of corn for the chickens, and bring back full of fresh eggs for breakfast. And the child knew the relative merits of bantam, dominicho, duck-legged, or Spanish broods, as well as their mistress. Shanghais and Cochin Chinas were unheard of in that day.

But Mrs. Lyon's pride of prides was her drove of cows—unexcelled and even unapproached in all the country around. And to these especially, the old lady often gave her personal attention.

And whenever she walked down to the cow-pen in the afternoon milking-time, to see for herself that her cows were in a good condition, and that her milk-maids did their duty faithfully, little Drusilla walked behind her, with a little basket in her hand full of small, sweet apples to treat the pets. And with her own little hand she

would hold a small apple up to the great mouth of some prize cow, and laugh to see the long red tongue thrust out and folded around the morsel to be crunched up by the teeth.

In a word she became the old lady's "shadow," and she learned all the old lady could teach her without giving her teacher the least trouble, but on the contrary a great deal of assistance. She gained much practical knowledge, if but little book learning.

Strangers who saw them together invariably took the little girl to be the old lady's grandaughter; and Mrs. Lyon was always rather pleased by the mistake.

And little Drusilla was "as happy as the day was long."

So passed the spring and half the summer.

But in the middle of July the Chief Justice and his wife went to the mountains, to Old Lyon Hall, on a visit to the General and his daughter, where they expected to be joined by Mr. Alexander.

Little Drusilla wept over the departure of her friends; but when they were gone she occupied herself with the commissions Mrs. Lyon had left to her—left with the purpose of interesting and amusing the lonely child during her own absence. These were to weed the flower-beds, feed the chickens, and take small sweet apples to the favorite cows at the afternoon milking-time.

All these pleasant tasks did the little girl gladly and faithfully perform.

Nevertheless the days seemed long, now that her dear old friends were gone.

But days and weeks, however tedious, pass away in time.

At the end of six weeks, on the first of September, the Chief Justice and his wife came back to Crowood.

Mrs. Lyon could not enough praise the fidelity of her little handmaiden. There was not a weed to be found in all the flower beds; the chickens were fat, and the cows in a good condition (though this last item was of course due more to the fine grazing than to the little treats of sweet apples tendered to them by the little Drusilla.)

The old lady and the child became better friends than ever. Mrs. Lyon had a great deal to tell about Mr. Alexander, and little Drusilla was never tired of listening.

And so three more pleasant months were passed at Cro-

wood, and then the family went back to the city. They were comfortably settled in their town house by the first of December.

Mrs. Lyon went out in the carriage to shop, and took Drusilla, and purchased for her pretty, bright-colored merino dresses, suitable for childhood.

Christmas came, and brought General Lyon, Miss Anna and Mr. Alexander, on their annual visit. And Mr. Richard Hammond came, an uninvited but not an unwelcome guest.

Little Drusilla was now always with Mrs. Lyon. The housekeeper had fairly given the child up to the old lady.

And Mr. Alexander, who, on this occasion, was the first of the Christmas party to arrive, found Drusilla in the drawing-room, neatly dressed in a crimson merino frock, with a ruffled white apron, and with her pretty hair curled and tied back with crimson ribbons.

After affectionately greeting his mother and father, he turned to the child.

"Why—is this? No, it isn't. Yes, it is actually my little Drusilla. Why, what a bright little bird you have grown, to be sure!" he exclaimed, snatching her up in his arms and kissing her boisterously, as she clung around his neck, smiling in delight, and timidly hiding her face.

"Well, I will say, mother, she does you credit. You have quite transfigured her. What have you been doing to her to improve her so much?"

"Giving her a little more sunshine, that is all, Alick," smiled the old lady, greatly pleased because the son of her old age was so.

"I declare I never saw such a change in any creature. I left her a year ago, a dingy little chimney swallow. I come back, and find her a brilliant oriole. Indeed, I didn't know her at first, and I shouldn't have known her at all, but for her eyes and forehead; *they* will never change. I say, father, by the way, talking of her forehead, look at it. If there be any truth in phrenology, *she* must have intellect."

"I don't think it requires an appeal to phrenology to prove that the child has rare intelligence," said the Chief Justice.

"Intellect is a snare as well as beauty: goodness is the

quality most to be desired," remarked Mrs. Lyon, gravely Then, speaking to the child, she added:

"Now run away into the garden and play for half an hour or so. This clear, frosty air outside is good for little girls."

Mr. Alexander put his pet down, and then the little creature ran out of the room.

"I must beg you both, my husband and son, not to say such things as you have been saying in the child's presence again. I have too real a regard for her to wish to have her spoiled."

"All right, mother; I wouldn't do anything to spoil her for the world," said Mr. Alexander.

And the Chief Justice also acquiesced, for the old lady was queen-regnant in her own family kingdom.

An hour later General Lyon and Miss Anna arrived. And at night Mr. Richard made his appearance. And with the coming of Dick the holidays really commenced.

On Christmas morning a great many presents were interchanged. And while rich jewelry, furs, shawls, dresses, laces, slippers, caps, gowns and gloves were given and received, little Drusilla ran from one group to another, deeply interested and sincerely sympathizing in the pleasure and satisfaction of her friends.

"I have not forgotten you this time, little one; see here, what a lot of pretty stories to read these long winter evenings," said Mr. Alick, unwrapping a parcel from which he took a large volume of "Fairy Tales," profusely illustrated with splendidly colored engravings.

What child's heart does not dote on Fairy Tales and on colored pictures?

Little Drusilla's eyes fairly leaped with joy, and she caught the young man's hand and kissed it eagerly, and pressed it to her heart, and put it on her head. Apparently she could not do enough to express how much she was obliged to him.

"Oh, nonsense; I'm not the Emperor of Morocco or Khan of Tartary, to be worshiped after that fashion," laughed the young man, "and my knuckles must be knobby sort of kissing. Up here, crimson lips, and kiss me on the mouth, if nothing but kissing will relieve your mind. Come, Miss Anna won't be jealous, not now, at

least, though I don't know what she might be if you were seventeen instead of seven." And he took her up in his arms, and kissed her very fondly.

"And now see here," he said, as he put her down again, "here is something else I have got for you—a pretty little *papier maché* writing desk, furnished completely. See, here is an inkstand and a sand box, here are pens of several sizes, and pencils of all qualities, and here are envelopes and note-paper of every color and shade. Now I know you can write a little, as well as read a great deal. So, when I go away again, I want you, instead of sending me messages, to write me nice little notes, and give them to my mother, and she will put them inside of hers, and send them to me. Do you hear?"

"Yes sir," said the child, gravely, as the tears stole down her cheeks.

"Now, then, what are you crying for?"

"Because you are so good to me, and—and you are going away again, and I shall not see you for—for—for a year," sobbed the little Drusilla.

"Whe-ew! here's borrowing trouble! Why, I shall not go for six weeks yet, and who knows but the world may come to an end before that time, and we may all go to Heaven together? Come, stop crying. What! you can't? Hey day! Do you love me as much as all that comes to?"

"Yes, sir," sobbed the child.

"Well, then, if you do love me, mind what I say, and stop crying. It blubbers your face all up, and makes you ugly, and I couldn't possibly love an ugly little girl."

Drusilla wiped her eyes by rubbing her fists into them, and then, little woman-like, turned her head aside, and stole a furtive glance at the mirror opposite, to see if she had made herself as ugly as Mr. Alexander said, and finding that she *had*, she began to compose herself.

And in a few minutes afterwards she seemed deeply interested in sorting the contents of her writing desk.

This was one of the merriest Christmas seasons that the young people of the Lyon family ever passed. The weather was very fine. Everybody was in good health and high spirits. Amusements were many and various. And wherever the young party went they took little Drusilla with them. She was the family pet.

Bright seasons must terminate, as well as dark ones, and the merry Christmas holidays came to an end, and the happy Christmas party separated.

Again little Drusilla was inconsolable, until time reconciled her to the absence of her friend.

But she obeyed his order, given half in jest and half in earnest. She wrote a little letter to him to be put in every one that his mother sent. And real love-letters they were too, though scratched in the most awkward of infantile hands.

"I love you so; I do love you so much; I do love you more than anybody in the world; every time I say my prayers I thank Our Father for making you, and I pray to Him to bless you and to keep you good. And I do all you tell me to do, and it makes me feel glad. And I don't do what you tell me not to do. And when anybody wants me to do anything well that is hard, they speak your name and then it seems easy for me. I let mother cut off all my long curls and did not cry, for she said that my hair would grow out so much nicer by the time you came back. But oh, how long it will be before you come back. But I won't cry after you, for you say it makes me ugly and you couldn't love an ugly little girl. Mother says I must not wish to be pretty; but oh, I do because you like pretty people. But if I am good you will always like me, won't you? Is there any little girl at college that you like as well as me? You've got the little dog, I know. You took him with you. To think you could take the little dog and couldn't take me. It does seem hard, cause I love you, oh so much more than the little dog becould. I'm not jealous of the poor little dog; don't think that, only it seems so hard, when I love you so much.

Such was the sort of ardent nonsense the little child wrote to her big hero; but after all, it was no worse nonsense than many of her grown-up sisters write to the heroes of *their* imaginations.

Old Mrs. Lyon never looked into little Drusilla's scrawls —or, if she did, she never took the trouble to decipher them.

Mr. Alick would smile over them; because they pleased him. He liked to be loved. The preference of any dumb

brute was pleasing to him; how much more so then the worship—for it was little less—of this fervent, earnest enthusiastic little girl?

"How devoted to me the little quiz is, to be sure. Christopher Columbus! if this sort of thing should grow with her growth and strengthen with her strength, what will become of me? Bosh! by the time she is seventeen or eighteen some young prig of a parson will cut me out and there an end."

And Mr. Alick laughed at the conceit, and thought of the black-eyed girl he had danced with at the last party.

But for all that he could not do without the child's love or the child's letters; and he cherished both.

This first year of Drusilla's life with the Lyon family was a sample of several that followed.

Every Spring the family went to Crowood, taking the housekeeper and her child and all the servants with them; and Drusilla renewed her acquaintance with woods and fields and streams; and increased her knowledge of plants, poultry, cows, and animate and inanimate nature generally, from personal observation.

Every midsummer she was left princess regent of the poultry yard, etc., while her benefactors went to visit their relatives in Old Lyon Hall in the mountains.

Every autumn the family returned to Richmond to spend the winter.

And every Christmas came the grand family re-union, in which, to the child's worshiping eyes, Mr. Alexander was the central figure. This Christmas gathering became to her the crowning glory of the year, for then she saw him. He became thus associated with all that was best and brightest in her life. He brought her the books and pictures for which already her intellect and imagination had begun to hunger. He always examined into the progress of her education; though that was scarcely necessary, for the constantly improving style of her letters to him revealed her steady advance. I believe that with her bright intelligence, she would have studied well from the pure love of knowledge, even if Mr. Alexander had never patronized her; but now all cooler motives were lost in the ardent desire to please her friend. And indeed she did please him; he was proud of her, vain of her, not as

if he had been her father, but as if he had been her creator. He seemed to think, as she grew in beauty and bright intelligence, that he had made her what she was. To his apprehension, he was the sun and she the sunflower, ever turning towards him for light and life.

Every one, who is not blindly selfish, likes to patronize where to do so costs little or nothing. Mr. Alexander's patronage of this child amused and interested him; cost him nothing; but won for him a vast return of love and gratitude.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GIRL'S FIRST GRIEF.

One hurried kiss, one last, one long embrace,
One yearning look upon her tearful face,
And he was gone---C. H. W. ESLING.

At ten years of age little Drusilla met her first great grief; and very heavy it was, for it nearly crushed out her life.

Mr. Alexander being twenty-two years of age, and having completed his college course, graduated with some honors, and returned home to spend a week or two of the beautiful spring weather with his parents previous to starting on his travels.

The family had not yet left the town house in Richmond, where General Lyon and Miss Anna, now a blooming young lady of sixteen, came to visit them.

During this visit it was arranged that Mr. Alexander should travel for two years and then return and marry Miss Anna, and that the young couple should take up their permanent abode at Old Lyon Hall.

But in all the interest and excitement of arranging his own and his promised bride's affairs, Alexander did not neglect Drusilla. He had come into a little property of his own, left him by a bachelor brother of his mother; and so before he went away he said to the old lady:

"Mother, little Drusilla is going on eleven years old and ought to be sent to school. And I wish you, if you

please, to look out a good one for her, the best that can be found, and send her. I wish you to do this for me at my expense. My money is in the City Bank, and I will leave you a number of blank checks, to fill up as you may require them. Will you attend to this for me, mother?"

Mrs. Lyon hesitated and pondered, and then answered:

"Yes, Alick. I can't refuse you anything on the eve of a voyage. And I don't see any harm in this—a good common school education——"

"Oh, mother, not that only; but the best—the very best—that can be got for her. See what a bright, intelligent, industrious little creature she is," hastily interrupted Alexander.

"What! do you mean that she shall learn languages and music, and——"

—"Everything that a young lady is taught, mother. Everything that Anna knows. Why not? Think how small the cost, after all, to me; how great the good to her."

"That is true, Alick. You are really a very noble-minded young man. I must say it, if you are my son."

"Bosh, mother, begging your pardon, I'm nothing of the sort. But I like to do a good thing now and then."

"And this will be a good thing for her. It will enable her to get her living as a governess."

"Not a bit of it, mother; Heaven forbid that my child should ever become a governess, to be teased by stupid children and snubbed by insolent mammas."

"Then I am afraid you and Anna will have to adopt her," said the old lady drily.

"And what's to hinder us? Think what a charming companion my child will be for Anna, and how much more charming if she should be well educated."

"Why you talk as if you were her father."

"Well, I feel as if I was!" said the young man, as a real tenderness softened the expression of his face.

The next day Mr. Alexander left home for his distant travels.

No one took the parting hard but his mother and his "child."

His father and his uncle shook hands with him heartily, wishing him a good voyage. His mother held him to

her heart and prayed and wept over him. Miss Anna kissed him with a cordial, cousinly smack, and told him not to forget her in foreign parts.

But when he lifted Drusilla up, as he had been accustomed to do, and kissed her on the mouth once, twice, thrice, and said feelingly :

"I cannot do this when I come back again, my child!"

She clung to his bosom and gasped, but could make no reply, she was so suffocated with grief.

He set her down very gently and went away.

The General and the Judge looked for the morning papers.

Miss Anna sat down to cut the leaves of a new novel.

But old Mrs Lyon took the hand of the pale, tearless, motionless child, and led her away.

Little Drusilla, sensitive, impressible and inexperienced, dropped under the heavy blow that had fallen on her with all the force of a first great sorrow. She fell ill, nearly unto death, moaning, in her semi-delirium, snatches of her grief:

"Oh, don't go! don't go! Two years—two long, long years! Oh! so far away! His man could go with him, and not I—not I who will die about it! Oh, come back! come back, or I will die—indeed I will die!"

Mrs. Lyon soothed this distress as well as she was able, and when, after weeks of illness, the little girl grew better, the old lady told her of all Mr. Alexander's plans for her welfare—that he had decided she must be sent to school and educated like a young lady; that afterwards she was to be taken to live as a companion to Miss Anna.

Drusilla listened very humbly and gratefully to this communication; but much as she loved knowledge, and anxious as she was to acquire it, she felt too bereaved and sorrowful to take delight in that or in anything else, as yet.

As soon as the child recovered her health, she was fitted out and put to one of the best boarding-schools in the city.

Her mother made no objection, only mumbled to herself this piece of philosophy:

"If we don't know much of the future, of this we may

be certain—when we expect anything to turn out *this* way, it will be sure to turn out *that*. I thought the child was going to be a nuisance and a bore, and behold! she is a treasure and a pet! And so it is with everything!"

And meanwhile, with one great bond of sympathy between them, the old lady and the little girl grew faster friends than ever.

But her devotion to Alexander—it grew with her growth, and strengthened with her strength. It was her one faith, hope, love—her inspiration, her religion, her soul; it was a part of herself—no, her *very* self—this all-absorbing, all-concentrating, all-devoting love to him.

His bosom was her home, though he might never let her into it; what the nest is to the bird his bosom was to her—the bourne of all her thoughts, the safe and happy resting-place of her heart, though as yet she was an exile from it.

The sphere of study was around her; it did not govern her, but served her, for all that she could get from it was drawn in to help the one great moving power for her being. She loved learning so much for his sake, that she did not know whether she loved it for its own. Her expanding intellect seemed only her enlarging love. Her advancement in knowledge seemed only to be progress towards him.

She seemed to herself to belong to him—to have been made *for* him, made *of* him, almost *by* him. She was as the rib taken from her Adam's side, conscious of her dislocation, and longing to be put back again, and made one with the life of her life. If Alexander had died at this time, I think that Drusilla would have ceased to live.

One other such case as hers I have seen in common life, and that must be nameless, and one I have met in history, the love of the child-queen, Isabella, for her grown-up consort, Richard II. And that there are many other instances of such devotion, I have no doubt.

Drusilla remained at the "Irving Institute" for nearly three years. With her love of knowledge and desire for improvement, her quick perception and retentive memory, her progress in education was both easy and rapid.

As yet she had not seen enough of the world to know herself by comparison with others, so there were some

things in her school life that gently moved her wonder; first, in the study hours, to see that the pursuits which were pastime and delight to her, were labor and vexation to most of her classmates; and second, at the school parties, to which the younger brothers of the pupils were invited, to see girls of her own age actually engaged in flirtations with boys who were no older than themselves, and who seemed to her, to be children.

With the great religion, idolatry—call the passion what you will—that inspired her soul, she could not understand such silliness in her companions, and therefore, pretty and intelligent as she was, her reserve made her somewhat unpopular.

She wrote to Mr. Alexander every week, because he had requested her to do so and she had promised, and also because writing to him was the greatest pleasure she had in this world except receiving his letters.

She wrote to him regularly every week, as I said; and about once in two months, on an average, she got a letter from him; but she could not complain for his mother got one no oftener, and both made excuses for him; he had "so much to engage his attention," they said.

At length, when he had been gone more than two years the letters ceased, or seemed to cease, altogether. Several months passed, and nothing was heard of Mr. Alexander. His father opined that he had passed over into Africa, where post-offices were few, and mails doubtful, and hoped that he would soon return into a more civilized section of the world, from which he would write to his relations.

Old Mrs. Lyon grieved and complained. She was sure that he had been killed by the Arabs of the Desert, or sold into slavery by the Algerine pirates.

Drusilla pined in silence, or if she opened her mouth to speak upon the subject, it was to try to encourage her old friend, and herself also. She told Mrs. Lyon that Bedouin outrages and Barbary piracies were horrors belonging to the past. She showed her the modern map of Africa, and pointed out how few and far apart were the points from which letters could be sent home, and she sought to demonstrate that the absence of post-offices

and mail routes was the all-sufficient cause of the silence of the traveler in Africa. Thus she succeeded in cheering the old lady; and whenever Mrs. Lyon felt more discouraged than usual, she always sought Drusilla to be comforted by her.

General Lyon thought as the Judge thought, that Alexander being in Africa could not write home; and he wished as the Judge did, that the wanderer might soon return to Europe, civilization, and post-offices.

Miss Anna never troubled her head about the matter. She was his promised wife, and so his mother hoped that he might write to her, if to no one else. And Mrs. Lyon often wrote to Anna, to ask if she had heard from Alick yet. And Anna always answered—"I have not had a letter from him for ages. *He has forgotten me.*" And Anna's "wish was father to this thought." And farthermore, she advised her correspondent not to be uneasy. Alick, she thought, would come back safe in time, no doubt.

People who are not anxious can be so rational!

But at length suspense was ended.

It was early in December. The Judge and Mrs. Lyon were in their town-house, looking forward to the annual Christmas visit of the General and Miss Lyon, when the old lady received a letter from her son. It was dated from Paris, and contained the joyful news that he had returned from Africa in perfect health and spirits, and was going over to Southampton to take the first steamer bound for New York; and that soon after they should get his letter they might expect him in person.

Mrs. Lyon, after reading this letter to her husband, and receiving his comment:

"Well, I told you so. I shall be glad when he is safe at home, though;" hurried off to the Irving Institute, to tell the joyful news to the only one from whom she would be sure of perfect sympathy, in this her great happiness.

She sent for Drusilla into the reception parlor, and told her all the news, and then read the letter to her.

The girl clung to her old friend and wept with delight.

"This letter came by the steamer that got into New York harbor on Wednesday. This is Friday, and there is

another due this week! He may be in it!" said Mrs. Lyon.

"There is another due now, and he will be sure to be in it. Think, madam, the steamer that brought this letter should have been in last Saturday. The steamer that should have followed it in order must be at her pier now. We may expect Mr. Alexander by every train," said Drusilla, as soon as she had recovered her composure.

"That is true! So we may! And, my dear child, you always say something to comfort or delight me! And you shall go home with me directly, so as to be there to welcome him when he arrives. There is nobody in the world he will be gladder to see. And this is Friday afternoon, and of course there are to be no lessons Saturday or Sunday, and so you can just as well as not go home with me and stay over until Monday. I will speak to the principal about it."

And she rung the bell, and desired the parlor-maid who answered it to take her respects to Mrs. Irving, and say that she should be pleased to see her in the parlor.

"I told the Judge to write to the General, and let him and Anna know that Alick was expected every day, so they might hasten their coming. But la! you know, my dear, these cross-country mails are so slow, it will be impossible for them to receive the letter in time to get here to welcome him on his first arrival. However, I know they will come as soon as ever they can. And I suppose we may prepare for a gay wedding soon. And no doubt you will be one of the bridesmaids. You are quite old enough—nearly thirteen, and I like the bridesmaids to be much younger than the brides."

And so the delighted old lady twaddled on until the door opened, and Mrs. Irving entered the room.

Old Mrs. Lyon soon told her news and made her boon.

And the accomplished principal warmly congratulated her visitor and graciously granted the request.

And Drusilla left the parlor to prepare for her ride, and in ten minutes returned, ready to accompany Mrs. Lyon home.

They reached the house in time for the old lady to bustle into the housekeeper's room, and order sundry

dishes of oysters, poultry, game, pastry, cakes and jellies added to the bill of fare for supper.

"For you know he may arrive by the nine o'clock train —that is the first one in," said the old lady.

"Who may arrive, Madam?" inquired the housekeeper, who had not heard one word of the good news.

"My son, to be sure, you stupid woman—who else?" exclaimed Mrs. Lyon, delightedly. And then she poured forth the news of the letter she had received from him.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Sterling. And she turned and kissed her daughter, inquiring:

"How came you out of school?"

"Madam brought me home with her to welcome—my benefactor," answered Drusilla, returning her mother's kiss.

"Oh," said the housekeeper a second time. "Well, I'm going to be very busy to get up all these dishes in time for supper, so don't interrupt me."

"Can I not help you?" asked Drusilla.

"No, you would only hinder me. I have no time to direct new hands now," answered her mother.

"Come with me, Drusilla, my dear, and we will go and see that his rooms are opened and aired," said the old lady, beckoning to her favorite.

They went up-stairs together, attended by Mary, the colored housemaid. This girl herself could have done the duty well enough alone; or at most with the instruction of either Mrs. Lyon or Drusilla; but both chose to see to the work and make it a labor of love.

The handsome bed-chamber, with dressing-room and bath attached, was opened and aired. A fine fire of sea coal was lighted in the polished steel grate. His rich dressing gown was taken out from the sandal-wood chest into which it had been packed with sundry other garments he had left at home and it was shaken well and hung over the resting-chair beside the fire. His slippers were laid upon the rug. A complete and well-dried change of clothing was spread out upon the bed.

"For you see, my dear, his luggage may not be here for hours after he arrives; and he will want to change his dusty traveling suit for clean clothes as soon as possible, so as to be sweet and nice and comfortable for the even-

ing," said Mrs. Lyon, as she laid a couple of fresh, scented pocket-handkerchiefs beside his other personal equipments.

Then fine soap and fresh towels were laid upon his wash-stand. And the Bohemian glass bottles on his dressing table were filled—one with Cologne water and the other with Macassar oil. Finally the wax candles each side the glass were lighted. And then, after a glance around to see that all was right, Mrs. Lyon called Drusilla and the housemaid to come after her, and left the apartment.

She passed to her own chamber and put on her best black moire antique dress, and her finest point lace cap and collar.

And then she went down into the drawing-room to wait for her son.

"And after all, we have no assurance that he will come to-night. We do not even know that the steamer is in, or if it is, that he is aboard," sighed the aged mother impatiently.

"He will come to-night, Madam. In one hour he will be here. I feel sure that he will," said Drusilla, cheerfully.

CHAPTER VIII.

FATAL LOVE.

Childhood's lip and cheek
Mantling beneath its earnest brow of thought;
And in the flute-like voice murmuring low,
Is woman's tenderness, how soon her woe!
Her lot is on thee, silent tears to weep,
And patient smiles to wear through painful hours,
And sunless riches from affection's deep,
To pour on broken reeds—a wasted shower!
And to raise idols and to find them clay,
And to bewail that worship—therefore pray.—HEMANS.

He came, even before he was expected. By some happy chance the train was in half an hour earlier than usual.

Old Mrs. Lyon had gone into the "study," to have a chat with the Judge.

Drusilla was alone in the drawing-room, when a cab dashed swiftly up to the street door, the bell rang sharply, and was answered quickly; and there was a pleasant bustle

of arrival in the hall, and Mr. Alexander burst into the drawing-room.

He looked not fatigued or travel-stained, but flushed and excited with exercise and anticipation.

With an irrepressible cry of joy, Drusilla sprang to meet him, and then suddenly recoiled, blushed and trembled between delight, timidity and embarrassment.

Alexander caught her hand, gazed into her face, and exclaimed:

"Why—Who are you? I ought to know. Your face seems familiar, and yet—DRUSILLA!" he suddenly cried, as he recognized and caught her up in his arms, and covered her face with kisses.

"Welcome! Oh, welcome!—I am so glad you have come at last!—I never was so happy in my life!" she tried to say, as she dropped her head upon his shoulder and wept with delight.

"And my child is the first one to welcome me!" said Alexander, sitting down on a sofa and drawing her upon his knee, where she sat, painfully embarrassed yet unwilling to move, lest she should wound his affection on this, the first day of his return.

"All are well?" he inquired.

"Quite well," she answered.

"Ay, so the servant told me at the door. Where is my mother?"

"Just stepped from the room. I expect her back every instant."

"Why, what a beautiful girl you are growing to be!" he said, looking down with earnest admiration at the long, black eyelashes that, being cast down, shaded and softened the crimson cheeks.

"Come! look up at me; I wish to see if your eyes are changed. I never could decide whether they were gray or hazel. Let me see!" he said, putting his hand under her chin to lift her face.

She looked up with a quick and quickly withdrawn glance, and her cheeks deepened in their hue. She hated to sit on his knee, where years ago she had sat a hundred times, and she hated to hurt his feelings by leaving him and she doubted whether she loved him now as well as she did then, and whether her love was not

turning into something very much like distrust and dread; and she wondered why this should be so, and secretly blamed and disbelieved in herself.

"Am I so altered by travel that you don't like to look at me?" he asked, smilingly.

"Oh no, sir, you are not altered, except to be—improved," she forced herself to say, with courtesy.

They were interrupted.

"She is too great a girl for that sort of thing now, Mr. Alexander, if you please. Be so good as to put her down, sir."

It was the voice of the housekeeper that spoke, as she entered the room.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Sterling," said Alexander, laughing, and releasing his favorite; "but it is hard to realize that my little pet is growing up."

"She is thirteen, sir," curtly answered the housekeeper.

"Dear me! Is she so? Why I dandled her when she was a baby! What an old man I am growing to be, to be sure!"

"Not quite old enough to be her father, Mr. Alexander, and therefore too young to make a pet of her."

"Come, now, this is a pretty way to welcome me home with a rebuke the first thing."

"I am very glad to see you home, sir, however; and—Here is Mrs. Lyon!"

The housekeeper cut her speech short, as the old lady entered the room.

"Oh, my son! my son!" she cried, and fell sobbing for joy in his arms.

The housekeeper withdrew, taking her daughter with her, and leaving the mother and son alone together.

Arrived in her own room, Mrs. Sterling sat her daughter down before her, and began to lecture her.

Drusilla—she preached—must not allow Mr. Alexander to pet her and caress her *now*, as he had done before he went away. Drusilla was too great a girl now, for that sort of thing. Truly, she was not a woman yet; but she was growing into one, and so the familiarities that were quite innocent when she was a child, would be extremely improper now that she was almost a young woman. Such was the purport of the sermon.

Drusilla trembled excessively, and wept a little over this exordium. In her heart she agreed with it, but grieved over it.

It was just such a lecture as any prudent mother might have given her growing daughter under the circumstances. But Drusilla, while acquiescing in its propriety, was shocked by its plainness.

Their interview was interrupted by the voice of Mrs. Lyon, who came herself in search of her favorite.

"Where are you, Drusilla, my dear? Come and thank your benefactor for all that he has done for you, and show him how much you have profited by his kindness," said the old lady, as she came in.

Blushing and embarrassed, the girl followed the lady to the drawing-room.

Mr. Alexander had changed his traveling suit for an evening dress, and was sitting talking to Judge Lyon about the voyage home.

Drusilla, at a sign from Mrs. Lyon, seated herself near the talkers.

"I want you to see how much your protégée has improved, Alick," said Alick's mother.

"Oh, I *have* seen, Madam," answered Alexander with a smile.

"After supper I want her to sing and play for you. She has a wonderful proficiency in music," said Mrs. Lyon.

"I shall be glad to have a specimen of her skill, mother," said the young man, turning to his father, and taking up the thread of the broken conversation, in order to relieve Drusilla, who was embarrassed by all this notice.

What between her own half-consciousness and her mother's severe lecture, Drusilla was perplexed and distressed. The great pleasure she had anticipated from the arrival of Alexander was mixed with strange pain—a pain not the less poignant because she could not understand it. To become the cold and formal stranger to him that her mother wished her to be, seemed impossible; while to continue the familiar child-pet that she had hitherto been to him was not to be thought of. If he had only been her brother, so that she might have had a right to his caresses, how happy she could have been, she dared to think.

But as it was, she could scarcely venture to glance at him, because each glance thrilled her soul with such strange, wild emotion, half delight, half dread. Ah, friends, she was a child of the sun, fervent, earnest, devoted in all her ardent soul. She was already, all unknown to herself, deeply and passionately attached to Alexander Lyon. The budding love of years had this evening burst into full bloom. And yet it was even more religion than love, and more worship than passion.

Supper was announced and every one arose.

"Come, Drusilla, you are the only young lady present," said Alexander, taking her hand to lead her in to supper.

He felt that small hand flutter and throb within his own like the heart of a captured bird. He turned suddenly and looked at her. Her eyes were cast down, and her cheeks were crimson. He gazed on her for a moment in grave silence, and then slightly frowning, led her on into the dining-room, and placed her in a chair at the table. He paid her all due attention at the supper, but with a certain reserve that he had never used with her before.

The evening meal was, notwithstanding this, a very happy one.

The judge chatted gaily with his restored son, encouraging him to talk of his wanderings in the old world.

The old lady listened with pleased attention, and only once in a while broke her silence to ask whether he had been presented to all the queens in Europe, and which was the most beautiful woman among them, or some such question as that.

Her son answered that he saw no woman in Europe prettier than some he found at home; and he glanced at Drusilla with a smile.

The girl beaming in the light of his countenance, and drinking in the music of his voice was intensely happy and—vaguely wretched.

When supper was over they went back into the drawing-room, and Mrs. Lyon made Drusilla sit down to the pianoforte and play and sing for Alexander.

He shrugged his shoulders at the proposition, but politely acquiesced and prepared to be bored. Alexander was a connoisseur in music, and he had heard the very

best singers of the day. Consequently he had little patience with the crude efforts of young misses.

She Drusilla, began with a very simple song—chosen in compliment to the newly-arrived son:

"Home again! home again! from a foreign shore,
And oh, it fills my soul with joy to meet my friends once more."

At first her voice trembled slightly; but the tremor only added to its pathos; and as she went on it gained strength and volume. She sang with much feeling and expression. And Alexander was surprised, and pleased and profoundly affected.

"My child, you sing well; I tell you so, who have heard the best singers in the world. Your voice has reached the depths of my heart, Drusilla, and awakened it to a deeper consciousness of its joy in home-coming," he whispered as she finished her song.

She bowed her head, partly in meek acknowledgment of this praise, and partly to conceal the blush that overspread her cheeks.

"Oh, that little song is very pretty and very appropriate, but it is nothing to what she can do. Sing Casta Diva, my dear," said Mrs. Lyon.

Drusilla raised an imploring glance to the old lady's face, but met with no reprieve there.

"Come, my dear! the Casta Diva!" she repeated.

With a deprecating look at Alexander the girl took down another volume of music, and turned to the selections from Norma. The piece chosen by Mrs. Lyon was a great trial to any immature and half-cultivated voice like Drusilla's, however excellent the quality of that voice might naturally be; and Drusilla knew this, and thence her imploring and deprecating glances.

"You are too exacting, mother. She cannot sing that. I do not think any woman under thirty years old could unless she had had a very remarkable and precocious experience," said Alexander, laughing.

"Ay, you say that because you know nothing of the intuitions of genius. You must hear your protégée sing, and you will understand better," said Mrs. Lyon.

Thus urged on, Drusilla began to sing. Her voice

arose tremulously, as at first, like a young bird fluttering out of its nest, but then it soared and swelled, gaining power and volume, until it filled all the air with the music of that wild, impassioned, agonized, terrible invocation and appeal.

Certainly Drusilla had never known remorse, anguish or despair, yet all these wailed forth in her soul-thrilling tones.

She ceased, and dropped her head, exhausted, on her book. Alexander made no comment, but took her hand and led her from the instrument, and then went and resolutely shut it down.

"There! what do you think of that?" demanded the old lady, triumphantly.

"I will tell you some other time," said Alexander, and he took and lighted a bedroom candle, and put it into Drusilla's hand, and said:

"Good-night! go to bed, my child."

Drusilla took the light and turned to the old lady, and held up her face for a kiss.

And Mrs. Lyon stooped and touched her lips, saying with a smile:

"I suppose I may kiss you *now*."

Alexander held the door open until the girl had passed out, and then he shut it after her and returned to his seat.

"Do you know, Alick, why I said to Drusilla just now 'I suppose I may kiss you *now*?'"

"No, mother."

"Then I'll tell you. You remember how you kissed her when you went away?"

"I do."

"Ah, Alick! your departure nearly killed your poor little pet. If you had been her own father, she could not have grieved after you more than she did. She had a low fever, and after she got well she would not let any one kiss her. She said that you had kissed her last, and that no one else should touch her lips until you should return and kiss her again."

"Did she now, really," exclaimed Alexander, with emotion.

"She did indeed, and she kept her word."

Alexander reflected a moment, and then spoke:

"Mother!"

"Eh!"

"Tell her teachers that I do not wish and will not permit, Drusilla to learn opera music or love songs. Let her confine herself to sacred music only."

"But Alick, my son, how absurd! I am particular enough, the dear knows, but I don't see any harm in good opera music. All young ladies learn it, and you desired that she should learn all that young ladies do."

"I was hasty; and now I say that she must give up opera music and such like. Let her learn and practise sacred music to her heart's content and her soul's salvation. Let music be the means, not of drawing her affections down to earthly follies, but of fixing them more steadfastly upon heavenly things."

"Alick, you do astonish me."

"I astonish myself, sometimes."

"Pray have you got religion, as the phrase goes?"

"No; I wish to the Lord I had. But I want her to have it. Mother!" he said, with sudden energy, going towards the old lady, "you don't know *how* I love that child; you can't feel how I love her—how near and dear she seems to me—how near and dear she has always seemed since I first looked into her soft, sweet patient eyes."

"I believe you love her as much as if you were her father."

"Her father! well I suppose my affection for her has something paternal in it, but fathers seldom love their daughters as I love her. Instance: Fathers are willing to give their daughters away in marriage, but I am very sure that I would rather see Drusilla dead than married."

The old lady stared at the young man, utterly unable to comprehend him. He continued:

"Mother, I tremble for that child. I trembled when I heard her sing that Casta Diva as I never heard a good or happy woman sing it. There could not have been *memory*—there must have been *prophecy* in those wild, despairing wails."

"There was intuition, and nothing more. But you

have been to Germany, and I suppose you have grown mystical," said Mrs. Lyon.

"By which you mean mad. Very likely. Perhaps my previsions are illusions: but mother, I nevertheless must *insist* that Drusilla shall drop opera and take up church music. Let her teachers know."

"Certainly, Alick. And now light my candle and wake up your father; it is bedtime."

Alexander lighted and handed the wax taper to his mother, and then gently roused his father, who had been comfortably napping in his easy-chair.

And the trio separated and went to rest.

CHAPTER IX.

BRIDAL FAVORS.

Love was to her impassioned soul,
Not as to others, a mere part
Of her existence, but the whole,—
The very life-breath of her heart.—MOORE.

The world was not for her, nor the world's art,
For one as passionate as Sappho's heart.
Love was born with her, in her, so intense,
It was her very spirit, not a sense.—BYRON.

On Saturday morning Alexander walked out to renew his acquaintance with his native city.

Mrs. Lyon said to her pet.

"If you know any very fine sacred music, my dear, I wish you would select some pieces and practise them this forenoon, so as to be able to execute them well this evening for Alexander."

And Drusilla, glad to have her morning's work laid out, sat down to go over portions of Handel's Messiah.

Alexander came home to luncheon, and in the afternoon attended his mother and Drusilla for a drive.

They dined and tea'd together, and adjourned to the drawing-room, where, at Mrs. Lyon's command, Drusilla sat down to the piano and sang to her own accompaniment on the instrument the all glorious "Te Deum."

Alexander was enraptured. It is scarcely too much to

say that he was transported—listening to the heavenly notes of her voice and gazing on the inspired beauty of her face. As for her she seemed all unconscious of everything around her, as though her soul were winging its way to Heaven in those strains of divine music.

When the last notes of her voice died away, there was silence in the room for some moments. It was gently broken by Alexander murmuring in her ear:

"My child, sacred music is your forte. Consecrate your glorious gift to the worship of the Most High."

Drusilla bowed her head; and after a few moments said:

"They want me to sing in the choir of St. John's church. Would you like me to do so?"

"My child, that must be as you please. Would you like it?"

"Indeed I do not know until I hear your will," she murmured.

"Then I will you to sing there," he smiled.

"And I am sure I shall like it," she said. "And now shall I sing the Hallelujah for you, and will you help me? There should be four voices, though."

"You shall sing no more to-night, my bird; but come to the center table, where I have some gleanings of travel to show you."

Alexander's servant had in fact just placed upon the table a large portfolio containing interesting views of natural scenery and of works of art, collected in their travels. And in examining these the remainder of the evening passed.

On Sunday all the family went to St. John's church together. But as Drusilla was not yet a member of the choir, she sat in the Lyons' pew.

On Monday morning, Mr. Alexander himself took his protégée back to her school. He was known there as a "patron," and his request that his young ward, Miss Sterling, should confine her musical studies to the sacred branch of the art, met with a prompt acquiescence.

Leaving Drusilla under the charge of her teachers, he returned to his home to find it very dreary in the absence of his "child."

"A letter from your uncle, the General," said Mrs. Lyon, as she received him in the drawing-room.

"He says that Anna declines to hasten her visit upon

'any gentleman's account;' and so they will not be with us before Christmas eve."

"Humph!" said Mr. Alexander, seating himself with much indifference.

"I do not know that I can blame her. Certainly it is not *her* place to run after *you*, Alick, even if she *is* your promised bride. She must stand upon her dignity, I suppose."

"Ah, well, just as she pleases; but I cannot but compare her with one who consults her heart and not her dignity where I am concerned."

"Don't be a coxcomb, Alick, my dear. You mean little Drusa? She's a child and has everything to learn yet of proper self-respect in her association with gentlemen. But we are not talking of her just now. I hate to send you from me, Alick; but I really do think you are bound to pay Anna the respect of going to Old Lyon Hall. I would go myself, if I felt equal to the journey, and take you as an escort; but as I am, I must let you go alone. There is a coach leaves to-morrow at seven in the morning. What do you think of taking a place in it?"

"I would as lief as not."

"Upon my word! If Anna is as indifferent in this matter as you are, I think it is a pity you two were ever betrothed," said the old lady, looking over the tops of her spectacles.

Alexander laughed.

"Our betrothal is such an old story, mother, and we are used to it. Besides it rests upon such a solid foundation—having one foot upon Crowood and the other on Old Lyon Manor—that we feel secure in it. And wherever there is security there must be indifference."

"Where did you learn to sneer, Alick?"

"I am not sneering. Heaven forbid. My Cousin Anna is a beautiful and accomplished young lady, for whom I have great respect and esteem. When I see her I shall press her to name an early day for the nuptials. And no doubt we shall get along as well as most people."

"Humph! when *I* was young, lovers were in love. I suppose you have 'changed all that now.' Pray, Alick, did you see any lady in Europe whom you very much admired?"

Alexander laughed.

"Why, of course, mother! Scores and scores! But they are last summer's leaves and blossoms, dispersed and forgotten. At least I shall birng to my bride a heart single to her service. For if I am not madly in love with Anna, I am not in love with any one else, unless you call my fatherly fondness for little Drusilla——"

"Nonsense!" shortly interrupted the old lady—"that child! Don't be profane, Alick. Have some reverence for innocence like hers."

Mr. Alexander fidgeted and made no answer.

"But I didn't mean to scold you, dear; only I would have you respect holy childhood, and let a girl be a child as long as possible. I hope and believe that you and Anna will make a happy couple. When you see her, of course you will say everything that is kind to her from me; and be sure you cannot say too much. You will either prevail on them to come immediately to us, or you will stay with them until they are ready to do so," said Mrs. Lyon.

Alexander agreed to everything she proposed.

And then their interview was interrupted by the entrance of some visitors.

The next morning Alexander went up the country to Old Lyon Hall, where he used his powers of persuasion to such good purpose as to prevail on Miss Anna, and of course on her grandfather, to return with him immediately to Richmond.

"If he will not go back with us, we must go with him, I suppose, grandpa. It would be a pity to deprive Aunt Lyon of her son's society by keeping him here, so soon after his arrival from foreign parts," said Miss Anna, expressing a sentiment with which the old gentleman sincerely sympathized.

So the whole party reached the city by the following Saturday.

The Christmas holidays were spent as merrily as ever before. Drusilla was brought from school to join in the festivities of the season, and she was loaded with presents and caresses.

Mr. Richard Hammond also came, and was quite as much up to every species of fun and frolic as ever he had been in his earlier boyhood.

He was very much with Anna, but neither her lover nor her relations seemed to take any exception to his attendance. She was so nearly married now that there could be no danger of his supplanting her betrothed, and besides, he was her near cousin, poor fellow, they argued, and so Mr. Dick was allowed to dance attendance upon Miss Anna, while Mr. Alexander amused and interested himself in his "child."

The wedding of the affianced pair was fixed to take place early in the new year, at Old Lyon Hall, whither the whole of both families would meet to do honor to the nuptials.

"Anna, you have not invited me to the wedding," said Dick one day, as they stood together in the recess of the bay window.

"Well, I invite you now, Dick! Come and be Alick's best man."

"I'd see him drowned first, dash him! I'd sooner be his headsman!" said the young man, grinding his teeth.

"Then why do you wish to come to his wedding?" askedAnna, elevating her eyebrows.

"Did I say I 'wished' it? Don't jump to conclusions, Anna. I don't wish it. I merely reminded you that I was not invited. You remember the fairy that was not invited to the princess's christening? She came all the same, but her christening gift proved no blessing. I shall go to your wedding, Anna, but the wedding present that I shall lay upon your table will be no peace-offering," he whispered between his white lips.

She turned pale, and then red, and then she laughed to conceal her agitation, as she answered:

"Don't be melo-dramatic, whatever you are. None but stage-struck apprentices ever are so. All that sort of thing is obsolete. If a young man is crossed in love, he had better marry for money. Alick and I must marry and settle like other sensible people. He will devote himself to improving the race of oxen and the growth of corn, and amuse his leisure with politics; I shall draw prizes for poultry, butter, and perhaps flowers. Life is prose, not poetry, Dick."

"Look at that child. *She* does not think as you do," said Richard, bitterly.

Anna raised her eyes and saw, at the opposite end of the room, in a recess filled with row above row of blooming flowers, this group:

Alexander was reclining in an easy-chair, holding in his right hand a small volume, from which he was reading in a subdued voice, and encircling with his left arm the shoulders of his "child," who was sitting on a low seat beside him. His eyes were on his book, but hers were on him. Forgetting her timidity, forgetting herself, her inspired face was raised to his, with glowing crimson lips apart, and slender black eyebrows arched, and large, starry eyes fixed on him, as she listened breathlessly to his words. He finished a sentence, and then turned to speak to her. And instantly her eyes fell, and her color rose even to her brows.

"Yes, I see; if she were a little older, or I a little more in love, I should be jealous," thought Anna within herself. But she said nothing.

At the end of Christmas holidays Drusilla was sent back to school.

Anna, under the charge of old Mrs. Lyon, did a vast deal of shopping in the city, besides sending to New York for articles that could not be procured in Richmond.

When all this was done, she returned with her grandfather to Old Lyon Hall, where they were soon to be joined by the Judge and Mrs. Lyon, and Mr. Alexander, for the wedding.

The day after the General and his granddaughter left, Mrs. Lyon said to Mr. Alexander:

"Alick, Anna wishes little Drusilla to be her sixth bridesmaid."

"I object to that. The girl is too young to have marrying and giving in marriage running in her head."

"Nonsense, Alick, you can't keep this affair out; of course she knows you and Anna are about to be married."

"Of course she does, for she has heard nothing else talked of for a month past," said Alexander, in a tone of vexation.

"Then let her be Anna's sixth bridesmaid."

"No, mother, if you please. It would take her from her studies."

"But, Alexander, you forget. She must be at the

wedding any way, for it would never do to slight the child by omitting to take her to it."

"I do not see that. Let her know that it is by *my* will that she is to be left at school, and she will easily submit to the disappointment."

"Well, Alick, I think that would be cruel."

"But I know it to be necessary, for her own sake, mother."

The next morning the father, mother and son, attended by their men and maid servants, set out in their traveling carriage for Old Lyon Hall.

Traveling by easy stages, and stopping at all the most comfortable inns on the road, to eat or sleep, they at length arrived safely on the evening of the third day at the old mansion.

The house was full of company, and all a-light from attic to basement. So many young friends of the bride were staying with her for the wedding.

Our city party was very cordially received. Anna herself took the old lady to her room, and waited on her in person. But—

"Where is Drusilla?" was one of the first questions she asked of Alexander.

"At school. Where is Dick?" he answered and she retorted:

"At his office in the city, I suppose. But—Drusilla! why is she not here?"

"I would not let her come. But—Dick! why is *he* not here?"

"I would not let him come. And—Drusilla was to have been my bridesmaid!"

"And—Dick was to have been my groomsman!"

And here the young cousins looked in each other's faces and laughed.

It was a merry party that gathered in the drawing-room that evening. Young ladies and gentlemen were grouped in small circles around various tables, engaged in diverting parlor games of one sort or another.

The General and the old lady were playing chess together.

The Chief Justice, only, complaining of cold and fatigue, excused himself from joining in any game, though he de-

clined to go to bed, and sat in the most comfortable arm-chair in the warmest corner of the fireplace, sipping hot punch from a glass on a stand at his elbow.

When his moderate glass was empty he spread his white handkerchief over his face, and lay back in his chair and dozed, undisturbed by all the musical chatter and silvery laughter around him.

At ten o'clock there was a tray of refreshments brought in, and handed first to the old lady, who was served by the General.

Next the tray was handed to the Judge. The servant who carried it stood in silence for a moment, and then said:

"If you please, sir, his honor is asleep."

Mrs. Lyon immediately turned and playfully whisked the handkerchief from her husband's head and asked him what he meant by being so rude as to fall asleep.

There was no response by word or motion.

She bent forward and looked in his face, and then screamed.

Her scream brought all the company in alarm around her. Her hand was on the old man's pulse, and her face was pale and wild with fright.

General Lyon gently replaced her in a seat, and went back to the Judge.

And in one moment more it was ascertained beyond a doubt that Chief Justice Lyon was dead.

You may imagine what a terrible shock this sudden death gave. How the wedding-party broke up in confusion and dispersed in sadness; how the unavailing skill of the family physician was called in, to do no more than pronounce upon the cause of death—apoplexy; how the funeral was solemnized in his own old ancestral halls; and how his body was laid at last in the family vault at Old Lyon Hall.

Drusilla, who had not been permitted to attend the wedding, had been sent for to come to the funeral.

She came, sorrowing bitterly over the sudden death of one who had been the kindest old friend to her.

She did not go back again to school. Mrs. Lyon, overwhelmed by the loss of the life-partner with whom she had lived so long, needed constant and affectionate atten-

tion, and entreated that her favorite should be left with her.

Under the circumstances of her bereavement Alexander could refuse his mother nothing. So Drusilla remained in attendance upon her benefactress.

The widow, exhausted by grief and unable to travel stayed with the General and his granddaughter all the winter.

Alexander, engaged in setting his late father's family affairs in order, preparatory to administering on his estate, went backwards and forwards between Richmond and Old Lyon Hall.

Late in the following spring Mrs. Lyon went to Crowood, taking Drusilla with her.

The first few days at the old country-seat, where she had passed so many tranquil, happy seasons with her lost husband, renewed all her grief.

But Drusilla, guided by a happy instinct, drew her out among her flowers, and fowls, and cows and other pets and hobbies.

Most fortunately, I say, all these had been grossly neglected during her absence, as though under the circumstances of her bereavement, her annual visit was not expected. And the old lady, the mourning widow, seeing the condition of her favorites, ceased to weep like Niobe, and began to scold like Xantippe.

And of course she got better directly.

It took her and her handmaid Drusilla, assisted by a staff of men and maids, the whole summer to bring flowers, poultry and cows up to the old lady's standard of perfection. And by the time this was done her health and cheerfulness returned.

There was nothing, now that the Chief Justice was off the bench forever, to call her to the city. So she determined to make Crowood her permanent residence. With this view she wrote to the housekeeper, who had remained in charge of the city house, to pack up her personal effects and forward them to Crowood, and then to come down herself, as the house was to be put into the hands of architects, decorators, and upholsterers, to be thoroughly renovated for the use of the young pair, whose wedding-day was again fixed.

Mrs. Lyon was the more urgent for her housekeeper to hasten to Crowood, because there was a contagious fever of a very malignant type raging in Richmond.

In answer to her letters, Mrs. Sterling sent down, by a wagon express, about seventy trunks, boxes and bundles, and within a week followed them.

"I am very glad you have arrived, Sterling. I had not an easy hour while you remained in the city, exposed to that terrible fever. And Drusilla would have been as anxious as I was if she had known the danger; but I kept it concealed from her. It was of no use to trouble the child," Mrs. Lyon said, in welcoming her housekeeper.

But the poor old lady of Crowood congratulated herself before the danger was over.

Apparently, Mrs. Sterling had brought down the seeds of fever in her system, for the day after her arrival she was taken with a shivering fit, followed by a glow of heat, headache, nausea and prostration, and in twenty-four hours she was in a raging fever and delirium.

The old lady was not a coward; she was a conscientious Christian. Now that the fever had come, she faced it. She sent for the country doctor, and instead of trusting the sick woman to the care of servants, she, with Drusilla's assistance, nursed the patient in person. This course of conduct was more magnanimous than prudent.

Mrs. Sterling, "tough as a pine knot, and with no more nerves than it," as the country doctor said, survived the fever and got up, though with a broken constitution, for all those whom that dreadful pestilence spared to life it ruined in health.

But Mrs. Lyon contracted the disease, and it made but short work with the feeble old lady.

In the beginning of her illness her son was summoned in haste from Richmond; but though he used his utmost speed in hurrying to her bedside, he only arrived in time to hear her last wishes and receive her divine blessing.

"You must not grieve after me, Alick, my dear. Think what a long and happy life I have had up to this time. But think, now that your father is gone, how lonely I must be. I want to be with him, Alick."

These were almost her last words. She fell into stupor

and revived only once more, long enough to lay her hand on her son's head and bless him.

By her expressed wish her body was carried to Old Lyon Hall, and placed in the vault beside that of her husband.

And the wedding was put off for another year.

"There is a fatality in it. We shall never be united, or if we should be the union will bring nothing but woe," said Anna to her grandfather.

Wait until it is put off a third time, my dear, before you make such a fatal prediction," answered the General.

After the burial, Mr. Lyon went down to Crowood, where his presence was necessary to the settlement of some local business.

There more melancholy news met him. Mrs. Sterling, whose brain had been seriously affected by the fever, was now certainly losing her reason, and Drusilla was almost broken-hearted between the death of her dear friend and in the infirmity of her dear mother.

It is said that madness often reverses the whole moral character. Mrs. Sterling who, in her proper senses, had been one of the most active, energetic and domineering of women, was now one of the meekest, gentlest and most harmless of lunatics. Her illusions were all innocent, and some of them amusing. Sometimes she fancied herself the mistress of Crowood. At other times she imagined that Alexander and Drusilla were married, and making a visit to her there.

Her pleasing illusions did not prevent her from performing all her household duties, only she discharged them in the capacity of mistress, not manager.

Mr. Lyon consulted the country doctor, who told him that in Mrs. Sterling's case there was a gradual softening of the brain that must prove fatal.

A part of Alexander's business at Crowood was to take Drusilla back to school. But it was now certain that she must not be separated from her mother.

For Drusilla's sake, he wished that Mrs. Sterling might have the best medical advice. So he decided to take her to Richmond, to be examined by the faculty there. But as she persisted in imagining herself mistress of Crowood, instead of the hired housekeeper of the master, to be directed by his will, she refused to leave the place.

Then Alexander, taking advantage of the hallucination in regard to the supposed marriage of Drusilla and himself, let a day or two pass, to enable her to forget the first proposal, and then invited her to pay himself and her daughter a visit at their new house in the city.

This the harmless lunatic readily consented to do. And she immediately began to prepare for the journey with a regularity and despatch not to be excelled by the sanest mind. It was evident that her mental infirmity did not incapacitate her for the functions of her office.

They went to Richmond and took up their abode in the town-house, that had been thoroughly renovated and refurnished in honor of that expected marriage which had never yet come off.

Mrs. Sterling was delighted with all she saw, and complimented her imagined son-in-law on his taste and liberality, and congratulated her daughter on her excellent husband and comfortable home.

Poor Drusilla could only throw an appealing glance at the master, which seemed to pray forgiveness.

But Alexander laughed and pressed her hand, as he whispered:

"Never mind, my dear! Perhaps her imaginings are not *all* lunacy. They may be *second sight.* Who knows?"

He spoke half in jest and half in earnest, and drew her to his bosom, and held her there for a moment. But when he felt the wild beating of her heart against his own, and when he saw the deadly paleness of her cheek as it rested against his breast, he suddenly released her, half repenting his act.

Mrs. Sterling seemed to think such billing and cooing very foolish, though quite natural, between bride and bridegroom, for as she looked at them she murmured:

"Ah, poor souls, they think it is always going to be just so. La! look at any middle-aged married couple you know, and see the difference."

Meanwhile Mr. Lyon, holding his "child's" hand, stooped and whispered to her.

"Drusilla, my little darling, I hope I have not hurt your feelings, have I?"

She shook her head and tried to speak, but only gasped instead, and hid her face in her hands.

"You are growing out of all this now, I know. Almost a young woman, you are, turned fourteen, but it is hard to think you so; you seem still to be my own precious child," he whispered gently.

Still she did not answer, but wept softly behind her hands.

"Drusa, my daughter, you are not displeased with me, are you? I would no more willingly displease you than I would the highest lady in the land," he continued.

"Oh, no, no, no! You could not do so. Don't mind me. I do not know why I weep. I don't indeed. I am a fool, I think."

"That's certain," said Mrs. Sterling, dryly, "and so is he. Young people are apt to be fools in their honeymoon, but time cures them."

There was a very dry method in the madness of Mrs. Sterling.

The housekeeper took possession of her old rooms, but as they, too, had been re-papered, painted and furnished, she scarcely recognized them again.

Drusilla had the little chamber that had been given her by Mrs. Lyon, and was now renovated as a spare room.

Alexander had his own superb suit of apartments.

Mr. Lyon called in the best medical science and skill to the aid of Mrs. Sterling. But the unanimous opinion of the faculty endorsed that of the country doctor, and there was little hope of the patient's recovery.

When the month of December opened, Mr. Lyon wrote to his uncle and to his betrothed, inviting them to come as usual, and spend the Christmas holidays at his house in Richmond, and reminding them that the meeting would be one of a quiet family party, excluding all other visitors, and abstaining from all gayety, in respect to the memory of the departed.

Anna wrote back on behalf of her grandfather and herself, saying that she could not make a visit to a house where there was no lady to receive her, and she begged that Alexander would come for once and pass his Christmas at Old Lyon Hall.

Of course Mr. Lyon could do nothing but accept this invitation.

And he dutifully went to pass the season with his promised bride.

And these were the most dismal Christmas holidays he had ever known. He missed his genial father, his loving mother, and yes, it must be confessed, he missed his "child," and he could not help contrasting the warm devotion of his little "daughter" with the cool indifference of his promised wife.

His visit to Old Lyon Hall came to a sudden end. He received a letter from one of the servants of the city house.

Mrs. Sterling had died suddenly, if he pleased, and what was to be done with Miss Drusilla?

Mr. Lyon showed that letter to Anna, made his excuses to the General, and set off at once for Richmond.

CHAPTER X.

WHAT WAS DONE WITH DRUSILLA.

Master, go on, and I will follow thee.
To the last gasp with truth and loyalty.—SHAKESPEARE.

ALEXANDER arrived at his town house early in the afternoon. He was met by his confidential servant, Dorset, an old man who had been in the service of the family for nearly thirty years.

"Well, Dorset, so the poor woman is gone?" sighed the young gentleman, as he entered the house.

"Yes, sir; and not too soon, with reverence be it spoken. She had grown very foolish and helpless within the last few days. She died without illness or suffering, sir. She went to bed as usual one night and was found dead next morning. Miss Drusilla, sleeping by her side, heard no sound and felt no movement, and knew nothing of what had occurred until she arose for the day."

"How shocking! The second sudden death in the family within twelve months. And the third in all Where is the poor girl?"

"Miss Drusilla? She has not left the corpse, sir, since the death. She is watching by it now."

"That is very wrong. It should not have been permitted."

"Dear sir, who was to hinder her? There is no one, or I should say, there *was* no one in authority here to prevent her."

"That is very true. But go now and tell the poor child that I am here, waiting to see her."

"Will you go to your room first, sir?"

"No, I came up by the boat and made my toilet just before landing. I will wait here for Drusilla."

Dorset went away with the message.

And in about ten minutes, Drusilla, pale, drooping and woe-worn, entered the room.

Alexander arose and took her in his arms and silently folded her to his bosom. And she bowed her head upon his shoulder and wept softly.

"My poor child! My poor, dear child, you don't know how sorry I am for you," said Alexander, tenderly caressing her, and repeating the same words over and over again, until at length through her sobs and tears she answered them.

"Yes, I do; oh, yes indeed I do know how good you are and how much you pity us both—poor mother, dying as she did, and—me too."

"My dear Drusilla, you shall never want a friend while I live, or a home while I have one," he murmured, smoothing her disordered hair with his hand.

"I know that too. It is not that. I am not afraid But oh! if I had not slept that night, perhaps she would not have died," cried the girl, breaking into fresh and passionate sobs and tears.

"Drusilla, my dearest, you talk wildly," he said, trying to soothe her.

"Oh, no, no, no, I know what I am saying. If I had only sat up and watched her that night, I might have seen the change and saved her life."

"But, Drusilla, I learn that your poor mother was in her usual health of body when she went to bed."

"Oh, yes, sir, so she was; else I certainly would have sat up with her. Oh, I wish I had! I would give my

life now to have done it. Oh, my poor mother! my poor dear mother. I slept on by your side and let you die—die alone, without help, without even a word of love. Oh, my mother!" cried the girl, utterly losing her self-command, and weeping and sobbing and raving as if her heart would break or her brain madden.

Alexander let the wild gust of sorrow spend its strength, and then he said:

"Drusilla, if you had been sitting by your mother's bed, gazing on her sleeping face, you would never have suspected that she was dying and never known the moment of her death. My child, she had a fatal malady of the brain that was certain to end just as it did. She passed away peacefully in her sleep. Hers was an easy death. Drusilla, do not add causeless regrets to natural grief with these *ifs*. Nearly all persons do so, however. I never knew any one to die whose mourning friends did not add irrational remorse to rational sorrow by the means of these *ifs*. *If* we had done this; if we had not done that; *if* such a doctor had been called, or such a remedy administered. These retrospective *ifs* are illusions. Do not let them deceive you.—"

These words he spoke, while with a gentle mesmeric touch he smoothed her hair and her brow, and held her head close to his bosom.

She had neither the power nor the will to leave her resting place; but her wild weeping softened into low sobs, that became fewer and farther between, until at last they ceased entirely.

Alexander looked down and saw that she was fast asleep.

Like a baby she had cried herself to sleep on his sheltering bosom. She was no longer pale; her long-curved eyelashes, gemmed with tears, lay on her flushed cheeks, and her slightly crimson lips showed the little pearly teeth within; her dark brown disordered hair fell around a forehead and down a neck as white as ivory.

Even in that solemn hour, Alexander, looking down upon her, loved her for her wondrous beauty, seen in its new phase of sleep.

But he had grace to know that such feelings were sacrilege against this pure maiden and sacred orphan;

and so he gently arose and crossed the room to a large sofa and laid her on it. And then he touched the bell.

Dorset answered it.

"Send one of the women servants here," said Alexander.

The man bowed and went away, and was succeeded by a fat, motherly, middle-aged person who answered to the name of Molly.

Alexander silently pointed to the form on the sofa.

"Ah! Lors-a-messy! poor gall! So she's gone to sleep at last. Well, sir, that will be the first sleep she's had since Sunday night, and this is Wednesday. Night and day has she watched by the corpse and nobody to hinder her," said the fat woman, holding her sides and panting, as she gazed on the sleeping orphan.

"*You* should have hindered her," said Alexander.

"Me! Lors-a-messy! I couldn't ha' done it except by main force, which I had no right to use."

"Well; let that pass. What I wish to know now is, whether she can be undressed and put to bed comfortably without being waked up."

"Lors-a-messy, yes, sir! When they's been watching and weeping three days and nights and then draps down and falls asleep, they might's well be in a trance, far's waking up goes. Bless you, sir, you could hardly wake her up if you was to fire off a pistol over her head."

"I'm glad to hear you say so, but I have no wish to try the experiment. I will carry her up-stairs myself. Do you go before and open the doors," said Alexander, tenderly raising the sleeping girl in his arms and carrying her, preceded by Molly, up two flights of stairs, to Drusilla's own little room. Here he laid her on the bed, and leaving her to the care of the woman, retired.

He went to the dinner that had been hastily prepared for him. And when he had got through with it he went into the late Justice's study and called up Dorset to a consultation about the funeral.

In answer to his master's question, Dorset said that the late housekeeper was laid out in her own room; that orders had already been given for a plain, respectable funeral, which was fixed for the next day. And Dorset hoped that Mr. Lyon approved of what he had done.

"Quite so. You have saved me so much trouble, that I almost think my presence here might have been dispensed with," said Alexander.

"If you please, sir, I only wrote to you to ask what should be done with Miss Drusilla, seeing that this would no longer be a proper home for her," said the old man.

"True; I must think about that after the funeral. Of course she can't leave the house while her mother's corpse remains in it," said Alexander, musingly.

And he mused so long that he forgot the presence of Dorset, until he happened to look up and see the old man still standing respectfully waiting orders.

"Oh!—you may go now," he then said.

And the old servant bowed and retired.

The next day at noon the funeral took place. The clergyman's widow was carried to her grave in the cemetery attached to the church to which she belonged.

Drusilla, the sole mourner, rode in a coach with Alexander. Her head, heavy with sorrow, rested on his shoulder, and his arm encircled her waist. She never thought whether this was right or wrong. She was borne down with grief, and she leaned upon him who was her only earthly support and comfort.

She had never even thought of putting herself into "decent mourning" for her lost mother. She was still wearing black for old Mrs. Lyon, and so she really needed no new outfit, except the black crape bonnet and heavy crape veil; and these the forethought of the women servants had provided her with.

Alexander sustained his "child" through all the last trying scene by the open grave. And when it was closed he took her home.

On entering the house he gave her into the charge of the motherly Molly, with orders that she, Drusilla, should take a cup of tea, and go to her room and lie down for the rest of the day. This was Thursday.

On Friday Alexander wrote to his cousin, giving an account of the housekeeper's death and burial, and saying that henceforth he intended to adopt Drusilla, and that he should take her back to school on the following Monday.

Could Alexander have foreseen the bitter mortification

he was destined to meet there he would as soon have plunged into a fire as entered that schoolhouse.

Drusilla, grieving incessantly, kept her room until Sunday, when she came down to breakfast for the first time since the funeral.

Alexander received her as if she had indeed been his daughter or his beloved younger sister. He kissed her and placed her in her seat. In the course of the meal he told her that on the next day he should take her back to the Irving Institute to resume and continue her studies until she should graduate.

Drusilla tried to express her acquiescence in the plan, and her thanks for his kindness, but her voice faltered, and her eyes filled with tears.

He looked wistfully in her face and read her thoughts, and answered them.

"You weep at the idea of being sent away from——" He hesitated, and then continued: "from all you have left to love at a time when you want so much consolation. My dear child, it is necessary for more reasons than one. But I shall spend the winter here as usual, Drusilla, and I will go to see you at the school at least twice a week."

"I know that you are very good and all that you do is perfectly right. I do not question these. But I must weep a little, and I feel you will have patience with your child," she murmured.

"My child never tries my patience," said Alexander, tenderly.

They arose from the table.

Alexander was rather a negligent Christian, but on this day he attended Drusilla to church.

On Monday morning he ordered the carriage, and took her to school.

When they arrived they were shown as usual into the visitors' parlor, where they waited while the parlor-maid took Mr. Lyon's card up to the principal.

A longer interval than usual on such occasions passed before the door swung open, and the stately Mrs. Irving entered. She bowed to Mr. Lyon, and started slightly on seeing Drusilla, and betrayed as much surprise and annoyance as it was possible for so cultivated and self-

possessed a lady to exhibit. She sat down, however, and waited for her visitor to open his business.

"I have brought your pupil back to you, Madam," said Mr. Lyon, bowing and waving his hand towards Drusilla, who immediately arose and courtesied to her former school-mistress, and then resumed her seat.

"Ah!" said the lady, very coldly, "I regret to say that it is not convenient for us to receive Miss Sterling."

Alexander looked surprised, not so much at the words as at the coldness with which they were uttered.

"I am sorry to hear you say so, Madam. Your house is full then, I presume."

The lady hesitated for a moment, and then seeing that Mr. Lyon was looking at her and waiting for an answer, she said:

"No, it is not full."

Alexander was more surprised than ever.

"Then, Madam, may I ask why—but I beg your pardon; you have certainly the right under any circumstances to decline a pupil. I would be glad to know, however, whether Miss Sterling's tuition fees were in arrears at the time she was temporarily withdrawn, or if they are so now?"

"No, sir; Mrs. Lyon settled the account."

"Then why—Again I beg pardon; I have no right, perhaps, to ask your reason for declining to receive my ward. But I will venture to say that if there was any misunderstanding as to the cause of her withdrawal twelve months ago, I am happy to assure you that it was from no dissatisfaction with the school or its teachers, or its discipline; and, in short, that no offense was meant, and I hope none was taken."

"None, I assure you, sir; for we all quite understood that Miss Sterling was taken from school to attend upon her guardian, Mrs. Lyon."

Alexander's surprise grew into amazement. If the school was not full, if the school-bills were punctually paid, if no offense had been given or taken, why in the name of wonder should the schoolmistress decline to receive back into her charge a profitable pupil.

"Madam," he said, rising to go, "I cannot demand an explanation of your refusal to receive my ward——"

"And I would rather not give one, sir," interrupted the lady, forgetting in her haste that it was not courteous to cut short a gentleman's words, and that she herself would have rebuked any pupil of her school for doing such a thing.

"I was about to say, Madam, that I could not demand such an explanation as a right, but that I would ask it as a favor. I will take Miss Sterling back to the carriage and return here immediately if you will be so kind as to await me."

"But, sir—" commenced the lady.

Alexander only bowed low in response, took the hand of Drusilla and drew it under his arm and led her from the room and the house, and placed her in the carriage.

He told the coachman to stop there, and then he went back to the parlor, where he found the principal of the school still waiting.

"Madam," he commenced, gravely but courteously standing before her, "there is something more in your refusal to receive my ward than appears. I respectfully ask you to tell me what it is."

"And I entreat you, sir, as you are a gentleman, not to press the question," said Mrs. Irving very coldly.

"Believe me, Madam, if I only were concerned I would press no unwelcome question upon any lady; but this is the case of an orphan girl who, for no fault of hers, has received a mortifying repulse. Forgive me if I still must press for an explanation."

"Sit down, sir, and if you must have it, I do not think Drusilla Sterling a fit or proper associate for the young ladies who are under my care."

"Madam! Is it possible that in a democratic country like this, the mere fact that a young girl happens to be the daughter of a respectable housekeeper should exclude her from the school where young ladies are educated? Consider; her mother, though in some sort a domestic servant, was still a most respectable person, the widow of a Baptist preacher," said Alexander, with ill suppressed vexation.

"Sir, it is not the girl's position, but her character, that is so objectionable."

"MADAM!" exclaimed Alexander, firing up.

"You have, by forcing me to an explanation, sir, brought all this unpleasantness upon yourself. I would willingly have spared my own feelings and yours by keeping silent," said the lady, very gravely.

"Madam, you have now said too much not to say more. Who is it that dares to question the blameless character of my young ward?"

"Common rumor, sir!"

"Common rumor!" exclaimed the young man, starting up. Then controlling his excited passion, and reseating himself, he inquired grimly—"What is the nature of this injurious rumor?"

"Her name is associated with yours in a manner that must be fatal to the reputation of any young girl."

Alexander stared blankly at the lady for a moment, and then exclaimed:

"Heaven and earth, Madam, what is it that you mean?"

"Sir, it is not courteous to cross-question me in this manner," said Mrs. Irving, blushing between embarrassment and anger.

"Not courteous! Am I to be on courteous terms with one who is stabbing.—Madam, if you were not a woman —But let that pass. I now *insist* upon knowing what you mean by saying that Drusilla Sterling's spotless name is associated with mine in a manner that must be fatal to her," indignantly exclaimed Alexander.

"It is said, then, that you are her favored lover, with no intention of becoming her husband," coldly and curtly answered the lady.

"Heaven of Heavens!" exclaimed the young man, starting up and striding across the room in his excitement, "was ever such an infamous calumny!—Your author, Madam! I demand to know your author!" he at length said, standing before her, pale with fury.

"I said common rumor," quietly replied Mrs. Irving.

"No, but that will not do! Common rumor is an irresponsible thing. I must have your author—one who can be called to account, and made to swallow the calumny, thought it should choke the calumniator."

"Then, sir, I fear you will have to call my whole school, with its patrons behind it, to account. For this rumor

came in with the pupils who returned to the school after the Christmas holidays. They heard it at their homes, or in the social circles of the city where it was spoken of. Of course, when this report came to the knowledge of the teachers, they severely rebuked their pupils for such sort of conversation. I know nothing of the truth or falsehood of this report; it is quite enough that such exists to banish its subject, guilty or innocent, from young ladies' society."

Alexander resumed his hurried walk to and fro in the room in much distress of mind. Then, pausing once more before the lady, he said:

"Madam, I am wounded to the quick by these cruel and fatal slanders. But would it not have been more womanly, more Christian in you to have defended the good name of that innocent girl and friendless orphan?—Friendless, but for my friendship, which seems to have been her bane."

"Sir, you must please to remember that my position as the principal of a young ladies' academy is a peculiar one. Had I even known your ward to be blameless, I could not, in the face of such reports, have received her without breaking up my school. Every pupil would have been removed by her friends, nor could I have blamed them. I regret to have pained you; but please also to remember that you brought this pain upon yourself by insisting on an explanation."

"And I was right! And I will drag the foul slander farther into the light. *Some* one originated it, and I will make it my first business to discover and punish the originator. Good morning, Madam."

And with a very ceremonious bow Alexander Lyon left the room.

When he entered the carriage, and seated himself by Drusilla's side, she turned to him with a sweet, bright confiding look, that smote him to the heart.

"Oh, do not smile on me so, my child! I have been too thoughtless of your good. But you shall have justice—full justice—grand justice! By the heavens above, you shall, cost it what it may?" he exclaimed.

She looked at him now in much distress, and faltered forth the question:

"Will you tell me what has so disturbed you?"

He reflected for a moment, and then answered firmly, though kindly:

No, Drusilla—not for the world. To tell you would be to wrong you. Trust in me, my child."

"Oh, I do, I do, as I trust in heaven!" she answered, fervently.

"And I will never betray that innocent trust, and may the Lord deal with me as I shall deal with you, my child!" he said, reverently lifting his hat.

In the meantime the carriage, bowling along at a rapid rate, brought them back to the house.

"You have forborne to ask me what passed in my interview with the schoolmistress, (Satan fly away with her!" he muttered between his teeth,) "and you have done well. If the conversation had been proper for you to hear, I should have repeated it to you," said Alexander, as they entered the house."

"But I trust in you," Drusilla replied, as she bowed her head, and then went up-stairs to take off her bonnet.

Alexander Lyon wen tinto the morning sitting-room and rang the bell, and then dropped, half dead with trouble, into his leathern arm-chair.

Old Dorset answered the summons.

"Come here—close to me," said the young man.

And Dorset, perplexed and disturbed by the looks and manners of his master, approached.

"Dorset, you are an old, faithful and very discreet servant," commenced Mr. Alexander.

Dorset bowed humbly and silently.

"I wish to speak to you upon a very delicate subject, which I would not name to any other person in the house, or even to you, except under the most urgent necessity. Dorset——" He paused, as if he found the greatest difficulty in proceeding. And Dorset bowed again, and waited in respectful attention. "Dorset," he resumed, "while Miss Sterling has been in this house, have you heard any rumor prejudicial to her good name?"

The old servant bowed his head upon his breast, and remained in a deep silence of grief and mortification.

"That is enough!" said the young man, grimly; "your

silence is more eloquent than words. But now open your mouth and speak, to tell me who started these reports, for, by the father of lies, I swear to visit them heavily upon the head of the slanderer!"

The old servant shook his gray locks slowly and sadly, and then answered:

"Ah, my dear master! in that case, I fear, you would have to punish the dead, and I scarcely believe that you would do that if you could, or could do it if you would."

"What do you mean, old man?"

"Ah, sir, you might almost guess. The report started with that poor, mad woman's fancies about you having married her daughter."

Alexander sprang from his chair, struck his forehead, and then sinking into his seat again, murmured:

"I might have foreseen this; I ought to have foreseen it when I humored and almost encouraged the poor creature in her illusions. But how did this get out?"

"Well, sir, it was in this way: her church friends came to see her, and she babbled to them about your fancied marriage with her daughter, which, of course, none of them believed. If you remember, sir, in speaking of the poor woman's death, I told you she died easy and not too soon, for that she had grown more and more foolish every day. It seemed heartless to say so, sir, but indeed it was true; for from babbling of your marriage with her daughter, she got to babbling about your wronging of her daughter, in the very worst way a gentleman could wrong a young woman."

"Good heavens! was ever such a fatal calamity?" cried Alexander, starting up and pacing the room in great excitement. "Oh, my child! my child! my lamb! my dove! my dear, dear Drusilla! Go on, old man! go on! what next?"

"Sir, they to whom she babbled believed this last lie, and took it into their addled heads that the mother's madness was caused by the daughter's ruin, and went and reported as they believed."

"*Who* were they?"

"Women, sir, more the pity! women of the church—old women who came to take tea and talk scandal with the housekeeper."

"And did Drusilla—did my poor child hear all this?"

"I think not, sir. Mad as the mother was, she had sense enough left to send her daughter out of the room whenever she was about to babble. No, sir; I feel sure Miss Drusilla knows nothing about it."

"Thank heaven for that! She shall never know."

"These reports, sir, caused me, in writing to you of the housekeeper's death, to ask you what should be done with Miss Drusilla; for I knew that this house was no longer a proper home for her, as I took the liberty of hinting to you, sir; for though Molly and myself and indeed all the servants, did all we could to put a stop to these rumors, we could not succeed in doing it. And so, sir," repeated the old man, "I made so bold as to ask you what should be done with Miss Drusilla."

"I know NOW what shall be done with her. SHE SHALL BE MARRIED!" said Alexander Lyon, grimly. "And now Dorset, you may go; and remember, not one word of this interview to any living creature!" he added.

"Surely not, sir," said the old man, bowing himself out of the room, and much wondering, if Miss Drusilla was to be married, where Mr. Lyon meant to find her a husband.

CHAPTER XI.

JOY FOR DRUSILLA.

> Joy trickled in her tears, joy filled the sob
> That rocked her heart till almost heard to throb;
> And paradise was breathing in the sigh
> Of nature's child, in nature's ecstasy.—BYRON.

WHILE Alexander Lyon paced the floor of his study, trembling with shame and anger, Drusilla sat in her little chamber, smiling with delight. The same event that thrilled his soul with a sense of wrong and mortification, filled her heart with joy. She was not to go back to school. She was to stay-home with him; and this was all-sufficient to her happiness. She neither knew, nor guessed, nor cared why she had been declined, as a pupil by Mrs. Irving. She had a vague impression that the

school was full, or the staff of teachers incomplete; but she was too entirely absorbed in the happy thought of being at home for good with him, to speculate about the reason why she was so.

During the last twelve months, while in attendance upon her late benefactress, and also while with her lost mother. Drusilla had had the entire charge of Alexander's wardrobe. To keep it in perfect order was with her a labor of love. So, on this morning, when she was so unexpectedly and joyfully reprieved from banishment, she sat down with her little work-basket beside her, and occupied the hours in darning small holes in silk and lambs-wool socks; and so neatly she darned, that it would have required sharp eyes to have found out where the recent rents had been. She worked and sang at her work, for her heart was overflowing with happiness.

Ah! even her mother was for the moment forgotten.

Late in the afternoon she was sent for to join Mr. Lyon at dinner.

She merely smoothed her hair and put on a fresh collar and pair of cuffs, and then went down into the dining-room.

There had always been kindness and gentleness in his manner to her. But now, as he arose to meet her, there was a tenderness in his expression that she had never seen before.

"My poor child! You are smiling; I really believe you are glad to be back at home," he said, as he placed her in her chair.

"Indeed I am, very glad," answered Drusilla, truthfully.

"Well, then—so am I," said Alexander, smiling on her; and then adding, in a lower tone—"It is fate; who can resist it?"

He helped her to the most delicate morsels, from each dish. And to please him she tried to eat a little; but, in truth, joy as surely takes appetite away as grief does; and added to her joy in being at home was a strange, vague presentiment of something about to happen, something imminent and momentous. All the spiritual atmosphere around her seemed as full of this as the air before a storm is full of electricity.

Alexander ate no more than she did. And neither spoke often or much.

At length, when they had lingered some time over the dessert, he arose and said:

"My child, are you too shy to withdraw, and are you waiting for me to dismiss you? Go, then, into the drawing-room, and presently I will come to you there, and you shall give me a cup of tea," and so saying he opened the door, and held it open for her to pass out.

"Mr. Alexander—you *are* glad I am not going back to school, are you not?" she inquired, doubtfully and anxiously, as she paused in the door-way and raised her beautiful beseeching eyes to his face.

"Yes! by all my hopes of happiness, I am glad!" he suddenly exclaimed; and then he added ("I am always glad to have my fate decided for me,") and then again laughing lightly, he said—"There, go away, little love! I will join you presently."

Drusilla went to the drawing-room; but she did not sit down; she walked slowly up and down the room, strangely perturbed by that presentiment, of which she could not yet know whether it was to be one of joy or great woe.

Alexander remained in the dining-room alone; not drinking wine, or smoking cigars; neither of these small vices affected him. He was simply trying to commune with himself; a difficult task to one so unused to self-examination as Mr. Lyon. He had always loved his beautiful pet, more than he had ever loved any other living creature; and always, as he supposed, in a fatherly, or elder brotherly sort of fashion. But lately this pure love had burst forth into a fierce passion. From the hour in which he had soothed her sorrow, and hushed her to rest on his bosom, and gazed on her sleeping beauty, he had longed to make that beauty his own forever. True, from the very first, he had combated this passion. From the very moment that he found himself contemplating the beautiful girl with other feelings than became the brotherly love he professed for her, he put her from his arms, and tried to put her from his heart, and made arrangements for placing her entirely out of his sight and out of his way, in the safe refuge of her school. How

and why she was rejected by the principal of that school, the reader already knows.

The very fact of rejection threw her back upon his hands, while the cause of it appealed to his manhood in her behalf.

When sinners can find no other excuse for sin, they plead fate.

Alexander, sitting and gazing dreamily into the lights and shadows of his glowing coal fire, said to himself that fate had set itself against his union with Anna, and fate had thrown Drusilla into his arms. He recalled the facts that his wedding with Anna, twice fixed, had been twice stopped by the hand of death; that Anna did not love him, and did love Richard Hammond: that he himself did not love Anna, but loved Drusilla; that Drusilla loved him, and had most innocently suffered reproach and injury on his account; that he had striven to overcome his passion for the beautiful orphan, even to the extent of taking her to school with the full intention of leaving her there, but that she had been repulsed and thrown back upon his charge.

He had decided that in all this was the irresistible hand of fate. This and many other arguments he used to persuade himself that it would be altogether right for him to give up his cousin Anna, and take to his bosom the beautiful orphan Drusilla.

And this would have been right, if he had only chosen to do it in the right way. If he had written to his betrothed and told *her* all that he told *himself*, there is no doubt that she would have gladly released him from his engagement; and then if he had asked Drusilla to be his wife, and had married her in the face of all the world, his course would have been upright and honorable. But he did none of these things. Alexander Lyon was proud, and he wished to satisfy his love, without sacrificing his pride, so he resolved that his marriage with the late housekeeper's daughter, should be a strictly secret one.

Having made up his mind, he arose and walked into the drawing-room, where he found Drusilla still slowly pacing up and down the floor.

"Why, you restless little creature! One would think that your thoughts had been as perturbed as my own,

Come, now! tell me truly, what you are dreaming of," said Alexander, possessing himself of her hand, and drawing her down by his side on the sofa.

Something in his look and manner, something that she had never seen there before, startled and almost terrrified her. For the first time, in all their association, a swift, hot blush swept over her face and neck, crimsoning both, so that Alexander, already half mad with love, thought her more beautiful and bewitching than ever.

"Come now! of what were you thinking?" he persisted.

"Indeed, I do not know; I have forgotten;—of nothing, I believe, I was not thinking; I was—trembling," faltered the girl.

"Trembling, my darling? Why should you tremble? No evil shall come near you while I live," said Alexander, tenderly. "Come, tell me why you were trembling?"

"It was—but you will laugh at me?"

"No, indeed, my sweet——"

"It was with a sort of presentiment that oppressed me," said Drusilla, in a tone deepened with awe.

"A humming-bird is said to tremble before the approaching storm, though no cloud be in the sky. You are as sensitive as a humming-bird, my pet; do you tremble at an approaching storm?" smiled Alexander, gently caressing her.

For the first time in her life, she shrank from him, yet immediately wondered at and reproached herself for doing so.

"Come, my love, is it a good or evil presentiment that overawes you so?"

"I do not know even *that* much. I have felt all the evening as if something was hanging over me—I cannot tell what. Yes, the air is full of electricity," she said, and stopped and shuddered.

"My child, superstitious people say that dreams and presentiments go by contraries. If you dream of a death, it is a sign of a wedding; if you have a foreboding of evil, it is a sign some good is about to happen to you.

"But I do not know whether *my* foreboding is of good or evil," she said, softly smiling.

"I will tell you, then, my darling. It is of *both*, since

it foreshadows love and marriage, Drusilla," he answered, gravely.

She started slightly, shrank a little, and raised her eyes timidly to his face, but dropped them instantly, and blushed beneath the ardent gaze with which he was regarding her.

"Drusilla," he said, panting and speaking low, "do you know how I love you?"

Had he asked her this question a week before, speaking in his usual tone, she would have answered him promptly and sweetly, and calmly.

But now she only trembled very much, without being able to utter a word.

"Do you know how I love you, Drusilla?" he panted low, stealing his arm around her waist.

"Oh, don't, sir! please don't!" gasped the girl, frightened at his caress.

"Don't what, my darling?" he whispered, drawing her closer to his heart.

"Oh, don't! let me go, please!" she faltered, gently trying to free herself.

"'Don't let you go, please!' I don't intend to, my beautiful darling," said Alexander, passionately pressing his lips to hers.

At that moment the door was pushed gently open by Dorset, who entered with the tea-tray, and stood still in astonishment.

"What the—?—What do you want here?" angrily demanded Alexander barely able to repress an oath, as he saw Dorset and hastily released Drusilla.

"If you please, sir, it is the tea tray," said the old man, in growing wonder.

"Hang the tea tray! What do you mean by bringing it here before it is wanted?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but it is nine o'clock, when I allers brings it."

"Then why don't you knock before entering a room? You servants are perfect vandals in your rudeness."

"Please, sir, I never was used to knock in the old Madam's time, so I did not know as I was expected to do it now; but beg pardon, sir, I will allers knock for the future."

"Put the tray down and go.—No, stay and wait," growled Alexander, beginning to feel conscious that if his kiss was an indiscretion, his fuss with the old man's interruption of it was a still greater one.

Dorset obediently sat the tray down on the table, arranged the tea service, bowed, and stood waiting.

"Drusilla, my little daughter, you must preside," said Alexander, trying to give a paternal aspect to his affection for the orphan.

Drusilla, blushing deeply, took her place at the table and poured out the tea.

Alexander purposely kept his old servant in waiting until they had finished. Then he bid Dorset to remove the service.

As soon as he found himself alone with Drusilla, he saw that the girl was trembling excessively.

"Don't be alarmed, dear love, and don't distrust me," he said, drawing his chair beside her. "I asked you just now if you knew how I loved you. You did not reply, but I will answer the question for you. No, Drusilla, you don't know how I love, for I love you so much that I wish to make you my own forever and ever. Drusilla, you must be my wife, never to be parted from me again."

She looked up in his face, her arched brows, dilated eyes and parted lips expressing amazement, delight, and even terror.

"You will be my wife, Drusilla?" he whispered, drawing her towards him.

And then her overwrought heart found relief in tears, and she wept freely on his bosom. When at length she ceased to sob, and grew quiet, he bent his head down to hers and whispered:

"All this means 'yes,' does it not, my own?"

"But—but—Miss Anna!" murmured the girl, scarcely trusting her voice to speak.

"Oh, Miss Anna——" He nearly uttered an oath consigning his cousin to perdition, but he caught himself in time, and added: "Miss Anna and myself are parted (by a hundred miles of space,") was his mental reservation the first.

"She has broken with you, then?" said Drusilla, who

never dreamed of such a possibility as *his* breaking faith with any one.

"Yes, she has, (in effect,") was his mental reservation the second.

"Oh, how could—how could she do it?" inquired Drusilla, incredulously; for to her fond, worshiping heart, it seemed that any woman who could break faith with Alexander must be insane or lost.

"And you are grieved at this?" murmured the girl, mournfully.

"I! I grieved at it? I never was so glad of anything in my life! My child, I never loved Anna except as a cousin. She never loved me in any other than a cousinly way. We were betrothed by our parents—a sure process to prevent our ever falling in love with each other. Ours was to be 'a union of hands and a union of lands,' but not 'a union of hearts.' We really never wished to marry each other. She loves Richard as well as she can love anybody, and I —I love you as I never loved any other. Come, my darling, you are to be mine forever."

"But Mr. Alexander—a poor girl like myself—your late housekeeper's child—only half educated, too—I am not fit to be your wife," she said, raising her meek eyes to his face, and then suddenly dropping them.

"Not fit to be my wife! If you are not, it is only because you are so much too good for me!" vehemently exclaimed Drusilla's lover, and he spoke the truth.

"Oh no! Oh no! please do not say such things to me. I am but a poor, ignorant child, of very humble position. You are a gentleman of rank and wealth. Indeed, sir, it is not suitable——"

"Drusilla! You do not love me!" he exclaimed, as if he had been charging her with a great sin.

A year before, she would have thrown her arms around his neck, and amid tears and caresses, she would have assured him that she loved him more than all others on earth. But she could make no such protestations now, though her love for him had in this year grown and strengthened, until it absorbed her whole being. She could only raise a quick and quickly withdrawn deprecating glance to his face.

"Come, that means that you do love me a little. If so,

let me be the judge of your fitness to be my wife," he said, looking tenderly down on her bowed face.

"I know you must be the best judge," she meekly admitted.

"Then, it is a settled thing. You are to be my own," he whispered.

"If you think that a poor girl like myself can comfort you for the loss of Miss Anna—"

"Bosh! I beg your pardon, little love. But I don't need comfort for the loss of Miss Anna. I require congratulations rather. Didn't I tell you that I never was so glad of anything in my life? And didn't I give you half a dozen reasons of being glad of it? I want you to be my love and joy. Come, darling, will you be my wife? Try to answer—"

She stooped and whispered—

"I will be anything you wish me to. If you should tell me to go and be a nun, I would go and be one."

He was not more than half pleased with his answer, which he did not understand.

"So you only consent to marry me because I ask you to do it; and not because you love me, or because to do so would make you happy?" he asked.

Again her shy, soft eyes were lifted to his face with a pleading glance and then cast down.

"Answer me, Drusa," he said.

"It would make me happy to do anything you should ask me to do; for I love to feel that I belong to you, to do your bidding; and that you have a right to dispose of me as you please," she murmured, in a very low and timid tone, hesitating and blushing to utter her own pure thoughts.

"This is devotion, this is submission, but it may not be the love that makes happiness. Drusilla, apart from all this—your pleasure in pleasing me. Will it make you in yourself happy to be my wife and spend your whole life by my side?" he earnestly inquired.

"As happy as an angel in Heaven," she aspirated, in a low and fervent tone.

He caught her closer to his bosom and pressed her there; he pressed kisses on her lips, her cheeks, her brow; he called her by every endearing name——

There came a gentle, discreet knock at the door.

"Well! Who's there? Come in!" said Mr. Alexander impatiently, as he gently put Drusilla off his knee.

The door opened and Dorset appeared.

"What now? I really believe you are wantonly trying my temper!" exclaimed Alexander.

"If you please, sir, I thought maybe you had retired, and I came to rake out the fire and turn off the gas, as usual, before going to bed myself."

"What! at *this* hour?"

"Beg pardon, sir, but this is the usual hour."

Alexander looked up at the clock on the mantelpiece, and saw with surprise, that it was past eleven.

"My little daughter, I have kept you up too late. You must go to rest now. Good night," he said, taking a bedroom candle from the side table, lighting it, and putting it in the hands of Drusilla, who immediately withdrew.

She went to her room in a delirium of joy, every nerve thrilling, heart beating, brain whirling with joy. To be Alexander's wife! It was a Heaven of Heavens she had never dreamed of. She dropped on her knees beside her bed, and fervently thanked God for her great happiness.

CHAPTER XII.

A REALLY HAPPY BRIDE.

How beautiful she looked, her conscious heart
Glowed in her cheek and yet she felt no wrong.
Oh, love, how perfect thy majestic art.
Strengthening the weak and trampling on the strong!
How self-deceitful is the sagest part
Of mortals whom thy art hath led along.—BYRON.

I SAID that joy takes away the appetite as surely as grief does; and joy as well as grief banishes repose. Drusilla lay awake, in a happy reverie, until near morning, when she fell into fitful slumbers that soon deepened into dreamless sleep.

It was late in the forenoon when she awoke.

Ah! how many of us have awakened from such deep

insensibility to the consciousness of some heavy but undefined and half-forgotten woe, that all too soon takes shape and distinctness to confront and overwhelm us!

Drusilla, on the contrary, awoke in the golden mist of some great but vague joy, that soon shaped itself into the thought that she was to be the wife of one she loved more than her own soul, and only less than her God.

But such exultation of the spirit seldome last long.

Before the girl had finished her simple morning toilet, her joy was sunk in remorseful tenderness that she could rejoice in anything so soon after her poor mother's death. And she wept; but though less exultant, she was scarcely less happy.

She went down into the morning sitting-room. Alexander had waited for her, because he would not breakfast without her. He met her with a radiant smile, and he welcomed her with a warm embrace.

After breakfast, he spoke to her of his plans for the future. He told her that he wished their marriage to take place almost immediately.

She timidly expressed her feelings on this subject; the equal pain she would feel in opposing his wishes on the one hand, or, in marrying so soon after her mother's death on the other.

"But why should you feel pain at the thought of marrying so soon after your poor mother's death, my darling?" tenderly inquired her lover.

"It would seem heartless; it would seem disrespectful to her memory?" said the orphan.

"Not at all, my love. Daughters are sometimes, when expedient, married even beside the death-beds of their mothers. You have heard or read of such cases?"

"Yes."

"Then why should you feel any scruple in marrying, if expedient, within a few weeks after your dear mother's decease?"

"But *is* it expedient?" she inquired.

"It is more. It is absolutely necessary. We must immediately marry, or——PART."

This last word struck her like a shot, as he intended that it should. She started, drew back, and gazed at him in consternation.

"Drusilla, my innocent, ignorant, child, does it not occur to you that it would be wrong for you, a young girl, and I a young man, to live alone together, or with only servants in the house, unless we were married?" he gravely inquired.

She flushed crimson over face and neck, but had no word to reply.

"Drusilla, we must be married immediately," he said, firmly, striking "while the iron was hot."

"But—so soon after my poor mother's death. To be made so happy, when I ought to be weeping for her," faltered the girl.

"My darling, you shall weep for a year if you like, so that you weep in my arms, and give me a legal right to hold you there. Come, Drusilla! If our wedding were going to be a gay one, with fine dresses, and fine company and festivities, you might, indeed, object that it would be showing disrespect to your mother's memory. But I propose that our wedding shall be a very very quiet one, as quiet as if it were solemnized at a death-bed. Come, what do you say to that?"

"Mr. Alexander, I know you would not lead me into the least departure from the duty I owe to the memory of my dear, lost mother. Decide for me, Mr. Alexander," she said very sweetly.

"Then I will. But leave out the 'Mr.,' my darling. I do not like the formality of that word from your sweet lips. Shall I decide for you in *all* things, my pet?"

"In all things, yes. Whom have I in the world but you?" she said, lifting her dove-like eyes confidingly to his face.

"No one indeed—thank heaven!" exclaimed Alexander, with triumph in the thought of how entirely this delicate, helpless, dependant child lay in his power and at his mercy.

The thought should have awakened his magnanimity, but, unhappily, it only flattered his selfishness.

He did decide all things for her. He decided that their marriage should be a strictly secret one; and he gave her plausible reasons why it must be so; but she needed for this, no other reason than his will. He decided that the house in Richmond was too gloomy in its

associations of insanity, illness, and death, for their habitation, and that they should go to Washington to spend the winter. And he arranged that he himself should go in advance to the capital city and secure a home; and that on the receipt of a certain letter which he should write, she should secretly leave the house and join him in Washington.

To all this Drusilla readily agreed. In the fulness of her faith she had placed her fate in his hands and left it there.

This plan was carried out. The same day he told his old servant that urgent business called him away from home, and that he should leave for Baltimore the next morning.

Dorset, prompt and punctual, had his master's portmanteau packed and his breakfast on the table by eight o'clock.

And Mr. Alexander left Richmond by the nine o'clock train for Baltimore, intending to take the next day's train from the latter city to Washington.

Drusilla knew that she could not hear from him for three or four days, so she waited three days and then went to the post-office, where, for greater secrecy, her letters were to be left until called for. Here she found a letter—the first genuine love-letter she had ever received. She had, from childhood, written many letters to Alexander, and received many from him—all, his and hers, filled with love, but not such love as this. Drusilla eagerly read it over in the office, and then, "all on fire with joy," she hurried home and locked herself in her own room, to feast on her letter undisturbed and at leisure.

Every day she went to the post-office, and every day she received one of these ardent outpourings of love.

Alexander had been absent about ten days, when one morning on inquiry, she received a letter that summoned her at once to Washington.

That night Drusilla quietly packed her carpet bag with a few necessaries, and before day the next morning she slipped out of the house and took the early train for Washington.

The train reached Alexandria early in the afternoon,

and Drusilla found her lover on the platform at the station.

"Come, dear love," he said, "I have a carriage waiting. We must be married in this town, and then I will take you to Washington."

In a flutter of delight and embarrassment she let him take her from the train and place her in the carriage.

He told the coachman to drive to Duke street, and as soon as the carriage was in motion, he caught his bride in his arms and pressed her to his bosom, amid the fondest caresses and tenderest words of endearment.

He was interrupted at length by the stopping of the coach, and the voice of the coachman inquiring:

"Where in Duke street am I to drive, if you please, sir?"

"To the Reverend Mr. Hopper's—the new Methodist preacher's," replied Alexander.

And a few more turns of the wheels brought the carriage to the house indicated.

Alexander lifted his trembling companion to the sidewalk, and then led her up the steps to the door of Mr. Hopper's residence.

A servant answered his knock, and showed him into a plainly furnished parlor, where sat the preacher and the family, dressed in their Sunday's best, and apparently waiting the bridal pair.

Mr. Hopper arose at once and shook hands with the bridegroom, and presented him to his—the preacher's—mother and sisters.

Alexander, in turn, presented his bride to the ladies of the house.

Then, as no time was to be lost, the young pair stood up side by side; the ladies of the party arranged themselves as attendants and witnesses, and the ceremony that made Alexander Lyon and Drusilla Sterling man and wife was performed.

When the blessing had been pronounced, Alexander saluted his "child-wife" with the almost reverential tenderness due to her sacred isolation.

The preacher shook hands with both and wished them much joy.

Then the ladies of the family came up with their congratulations.

The old lady kissed the youthful bride with much feeling, saying:

"May the Lord bless you, poor, motherless little thing! —And you, sir," she added, turning to the bridegroom— "Remember that her extreme youth and her recent orphanage claim a double amount of tenderness."

"I know it, madam; I feel it; and I thank you for the interest you take in my little wife," said Alexander.

He then slipped a hundred dollar note in the preacher's hand, bowed his adieux to the whole party, and led his bride back to the carriage.

"I am glad the dear old lady gave us her blessing. It seemed to hallow our union, as much as the ceremony did. But I wonder how she knew I was an orphan?" said Drusilla, as they crossed the sidewalk to the carriage door.

"I told them as much of your circumstances as I deemed expedient to account for your coming unattended by ladies, and in a black dress," said Alexander, as they paused while the driver got down and opened the door.

"In a black dress! So I was married in a black dress —a black bombazine and crape dress, at that. The very deepest sort of mourning!" exclaimed Drusilla, in a low tone and with a terrified look.

"Well, my darling, what of that?" smiled Alexander.

"Oh, it is considered a bad omen for any one, though but a guest, to wear a black dress, even a black silk one, to a wedding. And for a bride to be married in black, especially in deep mourning, is the worst of all omens."

"Omens be—blessed! Are you so superstitious, little one?"

"Ah! who is not? I never met any one in my life who did not believe in this omen."

"You've lived so long in this world, you have! and you've met so many people!" laughed the bridegroom, as he put her into the carriage and seated himself beside her.

"Where am I to drive to, sir, if you please?" inquired the coachman, touching his hat, as he held the door open.

"Are your horses fresh?" demanded Mr. Lyon.

"Quite so, sir."

"Can they take us to Washington? The distance by the river-road is nine miles, I think."

"Bless you, yes, sir! why they can take you to Washington, which is nine miles, and afterwards to Bladensburg, which is nine more, with the greatest of ease."

"All right—drive to Washington."

The coachman closed the door, mounted to his box and started.

An hour's drive along the beautiful wooded road, following the south bank of the Potomac, brought the travelers to the Long Bridge.

They crossed the river by that bridge and entered the city.

The near view of Washington from that point is not encouraging.

Alexander felt this as he bade his young companion look beyond the flats of the "island" and behold the distant and majestic hill upon the summit of which rises our Capitol.

The sun declined towards his setting, shone full upon the building's western front, whose walls of white freestone and windows of crystal glass flashed back the rays, "in lines of dazzling light."

Drusilla uttered an exclamation of pleasure; but was interrupted by the stopping of the carriage, and the appearance of the coachman at the door, inquiring:

"Where now, if you please, sir?"

"To Seventh street north, and out by that road to the suburbs of the city."

The coachman remounted his box and started his horses once more. They crossed the canal bridge near the center-market, and crossed Pennsylvania Avenue, and as they went on, Alexander pointed out to his companion, all the objects of interest within the range of their vision—a nearer view of the Capitol, then the General Post-Office, the National Patent Office, etc.

A half hour's drive up Seventh street north, took them beyond the limits of the city, and into the wild, picturesque and beautiful suburbs.

The wilderness surroundings of our National Capitol

have often been admired by strangers who are lovers of nature, and reproached by others who can see no beauty in anything but miles of brick walls and busy shops, or acres of ploughed fields and growing crops. We "to the manor born," love the wild-woods and rocks and waterfalls so near, as to be even within the limits of our city. A half hour's drive from the Capitol in any direction will take the traveler into solitudes as deep as he can find anywhere west of the Alleghanies.

A half hour's drive up Seventh street north took our happy pair quite into what seemed a country road.

It was bordered on the western side by evergreen woods, through which the last rays of the setting sun were shining and tipping every dark-hued leaf and twig with golden fire; and on the north by groves and fields and streams with here and there a solitary, but cheerful cottage from whose windows the "household fires gleamed warm and bright."

Presently, Alexander pulled the check-string and ordered the driver to turn into an obscure road or lane, leading into the cedar wood on the left.

"You have never asked me where I am taking you to, my darling," said Alexander, when they had gone about a quarter of a mile into the woods.

"No; because my trust in you is so perfect."

"Had you no curiosity?"

"Oh yes; but I thought you would tell me when you should see fit; and I knew that I should find out when we should reach the spot. I am very much pleased, however, that our home will be in the country."

"Not the country, darling, though it looks so much like it; only the suburbs of the city."

"It is all the same to me, and I am so glad we are to live among the trees."

"I knew you would be, love, and so I chose our home in this neighborhood."

"But shall you not be lonesome, so far from the city; you, who are so fond of plays and concerts and operas?"

"No, mine own. I shall be lonesome nowhere, with you by my side. Besides, thirty minutes' drive would take us any evening to any place of amusement we might wish to attend in the city. But here we are at home!"

he said, pulling the check-string and stopping the carriage at a rustic gate that crossed the lane in the very midst of the wood.

Some one issued from a very small porter's lodge on the right and opened the gate. They entered upon a semi-circular drive, bordered on each side by cedar-trees, that led them up to the front of a picturesque cottage ornée, built in a sort of composite style.

From every pretty latticed window of this little dwelling, the lights of fires and of lamps gleamed warm welcome.

"Oh, what a lovely little wildwood home!" exclaimed Drusilla in delight, as Alexander lifted her from the carriage and seated her on a bench of the little rustic porch.

"'Business before pleasure,' my darling, he said, leaving her there, and going back to dismiss the carriage.

He was happy and therefore he was extravagant. He never asked the coachman the price of his services, but put in his hand a twenty dollar bank note, about twice the amount of his fare; and when the latter fumbled in his pocket-book, said quickly:

"No, I don't want any change! It is now about five o'clock; you can easily get back to Alexandria by seven. Good-night."

The coachman was profuse in his thanks, and hoped to have the pleasure of driving his honor often. And he mounted his box and drove off, no doubt wishing that he could have a bridal party for a fare every day of his life.

And the bridegroom led his bride into the house.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHILD BRIDE AT HOME.

His house she enters there to be the light,
Shining, within when all without is night;
A guardian angel o'er his life presiding,
Doubling his pleasures, and his cares dividing.—ROGERS.

WELCOME, mine own dear love, welcome to your home," fervently whispered Alexander, as he led his bride across the threshold of the door that was held open by a pretty and neatly-dressed negro girl.

The young wife smiled gratefully upon her husband, and then looked around with child-like interest.

They stood in a cheerful little hall, illuminated by an antique lamp in a stained glass shade, that shed myriads of prismatic hues over the white and gilded wall and richly-carpeted floor. It was a hexagon shaped hall, with a staircase opposite the front door, and with four other doors, two on each side, opening into the drawing-room and dining-room on the right, and the parlor and library on the left.

"This is your little maid, Pina, my dear, and she will show you to your room, if you please," said Alexander.

Drusilla turned and smiled kindly on the bright-eyed negro girl, who took up a wax candle, and stood courtesying and waiting orders.

"Go on then, Pina, and lead the way; I will follow," said Drusilla.

And Alexander placed the carpet bag that contained all the bride's trousseau in the hands of the girl, who, with another courtesy, turned and led the way up-stairs to an upper hexagon-shaped hall, with a bay window in the front end, and four doors, two on each side, leading into bedrooms and dressing-rooms.

Pina opened the front door on the right hand.

"Oh, what a sweet, what a pretty, what a delightful little room!" exclaimed Drusilla, on passing the threshold.

The room deserved her praise. It had been designed by the hands of love to please the eyes of beauty. Its colors were white and rose. The walls were hung with a paper of a white ground, with a running vine of wild roses over it. The floor was covered with a carpet white with the same patterns of wild roses running over it The windows were curtained with white lace, lined with rose-colored silk. The dressing-table that stood between the windows was draped to match them, in white lace over rose silk. The bed was spread with a white crochet counterpane, lined with rose satin. The chairs and sofas were covered with white damask embroidered in roses. All the little stands and tables were in white and rose enamel.

It was a chamber to delight a child or a young girl

To crown all, a clear, bright wood fire was burning on the white marble hearth.

"It is—it is a heavenly little room!" exclaimed Drusilla gazing around.

"And here, ma'am, is the dressing place," continued the maid, opening an inner door and showing her mistress into a smaller apartment fitted up in a plainer style as a bath-room.

The young traveler, who really needed ablutions after her dusty ride in the train, opened her carpet bag, took out her dressing materials, and commenced her toilet.

Pina waited on her.

But little change could the poor bride make. Her carpet bag could not contain much. She had only brought a few clean linen collars, cuffs, handkerchiefs, and other absolute essentials.

Seeing this, her handmaid said:

"Let me carry your dress down-stairs and brush it, ma'am: it won't take me ten minutes. I will bring it up quite nice by the time you are ready to put it on again."

Drusilla thanked the little maid, and accepted the offer. And Pina ran away with the dress. And by the time Drusilla had taken her bath and dressed her hair the girl returned with the renovated garment.

"Supper will be served, ma'am, as soon as you are ready for it," said Pina, laying the dress over the back of a chair.

Dusilla carefully but hastily completed her toilet, for she was eager to see Alexander and thank him for the care and taste he had bestowed upon the fitting up of her rooms.

As she left her chamber she found Alexander in the hexagon-shaped hall outside. He smiled, and took her arm, saying:

"While they are placing supper on the table I wish to show you over our little toy palace—for it is no more."

"And no less! Oh, how I thank you for the beautiful——"

"Doll's-house!" laughed Alexander, stopping his bride in the outpouring of her gratitude.

"Oh, but the rooms are so very beautiful!" she exclaimed.

"Why, you have seen but two! Come, let me show

you the others," he said, taking her across the little hall, and opening an opposite door.

The apartment they now entered corresponded in all respects to her chamber, except that it was fitted up as a sewing-room, and its wall paper, window curtains, chair-covers, carpet, and enameled stands and tables were all in white and green instead of white and rose.

"See here, my love! I remember what a domestic little creature you were, how you liked to sit up-stairs and sew by the hour or the day, and how the very first thing you ever wished for was a work-box, and so I had this room fitted up for you on purpose," said Alexander, looking in her face to read her satisfaction.

"Oh, how good, how good you are to me! What can I ever do to please you enough," she said.

"Love me dearly, and be very happy! That is all I ask you to do," he replied. "And now look here, dear, I knew your wardrobe would want complete refitting, and I knew what a nice little needle-woman you were, so I have filled these bureau drawers and wardrobes with dress goods of every description—enough to furnish forth an Indian voyage or a country shop," he said, as he went to one of the bureaus and drew out the drawers, one after another, to display their contents—rich silk, merino, and cashmere dress patterns, all in black, purple, or gray or other mourning or half mourning hues; and whole pieces of fine muslin, linen, flannel, and other "staple" commodities, and rolls of ribbon, tape, gimp, and other dress trimmings.

"You know I had no woman's help in selecting these articles, and a man in a milliner's establishment is just about as much out of place as a 'bull in a china shop,' but I did the best I could."

"They are beautiful," said Drusilla, in grateful delight.

"And see here," continued Alexander, opening the doors of a wardrobe—and displaying several shawls, cloaks, circulars, mantillas and so forth—"as these things fit almost any grown woman, I thought I could not make a mistake in getting them ready-made. What do *you* think?"

"Oh, you—you are too good to me; you are extravagant—here are more than I shall wear in ten years," said Drusilla, between smiles and tears.

"Not at all! There's Anna will wear twice as many changes of apparel in ten days," he said.

"Ah, but Miss Anna is an heiress."

"And you are the wife of a—*wealthy* man, if not a *good* one," laughed Alexander. "But come, I dare say supper is waiting and spoiling. I will show you the rest of your little house to-morrow, and also your little carriage and pair of ponies——"

"Oh, *indeed* you do too much for me—I think I have not been used to having such things—of my own," said Drusilla, meekly and confusedly.

"I *could not* do too much for you, dear love——"

"But, Mr. Alexander——"

"Leave out the 'Mr.' from this time, sweet Drusa. What were you going to say?"

"I was about to ask you, please, not to make me so many presents."

"Oh, is that it? Why not?"

"Because—I love you. And—I only want you to give me your love——"

"I know all that, my pet. But let your conscience be at rest. Everything I seem to give you, as well as everything you have of your own is really not yours, but mine, because you yourself are mine."

"Is that so?" she smilingly inquired.

"Yes."

"Then so I would have it!"

While they talked they left the room, he leading the way down the stairs, to the little drawing-room.

This was a very elegant apartment, fitted up in crimson and gold curtains, chairs and sofas, rich mirrors and rare paintings, and recherché articles of *vertu*. At the lower end of the room a heavy curtain of crimson satin damask with gold bullion fringe and gold cord and tassels, hung from the ceiling to floor.

While Drusilla was still gazing with curiosity and delight upon the various objects of interest in the room, this curtain was drawn aside as by invisible hands, revealing an elegant little dining-room, where a luxurious supper was spread.

Alexander, with a laughing assumption of ceremony,

led Drusilla to the head of the table, bowed, and took his place at the foot.

A handsome negro boy, so like Pina as to be recognizable at once for her brother, waited at table.

"My dear, this is your other servant—footman, coachman, and groom—all in one. He is named Leander; but for convenience we shall call him 'Leo.' Just as we call his sister, who exults in the imperial name of Agrippina simply 'Pina,'" said Alexander, as he placed the breast of a roast pheasant on Drusilla's plate.

It was a pleasant supper, as you may judge.

And it was followed by a happy evening.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WILD-WOOD HOME BY DAY.

It is a quiet picture of delight,
The pretty cottage hiding from the sun
In the thick woods. We see it not till there,
When at its porch . . . quiet's especial temple.—
W. G. SIMMS.

"I HAVE the vaguest idea of the outside of our home—a pretty brown cottage in evergreen woods—that was all I could make out as we approached it in the twilight last evening; and that is all I can make out now, while peering through that crimson curtained window," said Drusilla, as she sat at breakfast with her husband the next morning.

"'A pretty brown cottage, in evergreen woods.' Well, that is all you would make out if you were to inspect the premises most carefully every day for a month. It is a new place, my little love. The house and stable only are finished and walled in. The grounds are not laid out or even cleared, as you may see by the thicket crowding up to the very windows," replied Alexander.

"But, I think I like it even better just so. There is something very fascinating to me in the deep, wild wood, where the trees may grow as they please, without touch of ax or pruning knife, and where birds may sing and

rabbits run without fear of trap or fowling-piece," said Drusilla.

"Then if that be so not a tree shall be felled, though we should have to send to the city market for all our fruit and vegetables," laughed Alexander.

"Oh no, no, no; don't 'Woodman, Spare That Tree' on my account. The woods are very charming, but so is a garden with beds of growing vegetables and parterres of blooming flowers; and so are vineyards and orchards, and poultry-yards and cow-pens, none of which can be had without the sacrifice of the woods. And you know what a good little farmer your dear mother——" Here the tears rushed to the bride's eyes, but she quickly wiped them away and smiled, saying: "No, I will not weep the day after our wedding. I will remember that she is in Heaven, and—happy as we may be, she is happier still."

"But what were you about to say, love, when you broke off?" gravely and gently inquired Alexander.

"Oh, I was going to remind you what a skilful little farmer your dear mother had made of me, and to tell you how well I can manage a little place like this, with the help of the two servants."

"Yes, darling; but you will not need to do so. What? You worry with the cultivation of cabbage and onions, and the rearing of fowls and turkeys, and the feeding of cows and pigs? It is ridiculous, the idea!"

"But your dear mother saw to all such things with her own eyes, and often helped among them with her own hands."

"My venerated mother belonged to an old school of housekeepers that are now obsolete, or fast passing away before the progress of civilization. Machinery does the work of laborers, and laborers have become intelligent directors of machinery. Nonsense! Even if this were not so, do you think I would let you spoil your exquisite beauty in the way you propose, Drusa? No, my darling, your beauty is too rare and rich to be put to any such uses. I think that even if I were a very poor man, I would rather labor day and night than you should soil your pretty hands," he whispered, lifting one of the little members of which he spoke, and gazing on it with the eyes of a connoisseur and the smile of a lover.

"Oh, Alexander! dear Alexander!" said the little bride, earnestly, "please do not prize my looks so much. It frightens me when you do so."

"But why?" smiled the bridegroom.

"Oh, because—one's looks——"

"One's beauty, you mean——"

"Oh, Alexander, it is such an accidental and perishable thing to be loved for. Illness or chance might destroy it in a day; and time will certainly impair it in the course of years. And whether I lose it sooner or later, what shall I do if I lose your love also?"

This was spoken so gravely and feelingly that the bridegroom burst into a laugh.

"Why you solemn little quiz! You remind me of a little prig of a Sunday-school scholar that I used to see perched up in the corner of the housekeeper's room in my mother's house in Richmond. A little 'rum un' who used to sew quilt-pieces and lecture lost sheep."

"But oh, tell me one thing. Even if I should grow ugly, you would love me still, would you not, Alexander?"

"*You* grow ugly? impossible! Your beauty, if you take common care of it, will last you until you are sixty years old, and by that time, I, who am so much your senior, will be so blind with age, or love, or habit, that I shall not know whether you are a Venus or a Gorgon," said Alexander, laughing, and rising from the table.

"Till I am sixty! So many years to live together, you and I, if Heaven should spare us. Such a long and happy life, if you only love me all the time. Oh, what can I do to keep you loving me all these long, long years?" aspirated Drusilla, in a sort of repressed fervor.

"Be beautiful, be happy and love me—that is all," he answered. "And now put on some outer garment and come with me, and I will show you what little is to be seen of our small place."

Drusilla took a gray hooded cloak from the hands of the maid who had run and fetched it for her, and she wrapped herself in it, drew the hood over her head, and took the offered arm of Alexander.

He led her out of the front door and down the step of the porch to the broad carriage drive that had been cleared through the cedars from the house to the gate.

It was a fine wintry day. A little snow had fallen during the night, just sufficient to cover the ground with a white garment and powder the cedars like coachmen's wigs; but the sky was now clear and the sun bright.

They walked down the drive to the gate, and then, at Alexander's suggestion, turned about and leaned against the gate, and faced the front of the cottage to take a look at it.

"A mere toy palace, or doll's house, as I told you," said Alexander, disparagingly.

"It is a beauty. But perhaps you are comparing it with spacious Crowood or lofty Lyon Hall; in which case it must suffer by comparison in size, I grant you, but not in beauty," said Drusilla, gazing on her home with perfect satisfaction.

"I am very glad you approve of it, darling, even in its half finished condition. In another year I will see what money and taste can do to convert it into a paradise for you," said Alexander.

"The sweet spot is Arcadia already. But how were you so fortunate as to get it, dear Alexander? And have you rented it, or bought it?" she asked.

"I have taken it on trial for a year, with the privilege of purchasing it, if I like it, at the end of that time."

"But why does the owner wish to sell such a pretty place, which he has only just built?"

"Ah, love, it is a common case. The place was commenced by a poor old fellow, who was about to retire from business on a comfortable competency. But he put off living too long, for just as he was preparing to do it he died."

"Poor man! and he never enjoyed the pretty place."

"Let us hope that he enjoys a better one. Meanwhile we have the privilege of purchasing it, if we like."

"Oh, I do like it so much!"

"Then consider it purchased, my pet."

"Not on my account. Oh, Alexander, dear, please do always what you judge to be best without thinking of me in the matter."

"But, darling, if I love you as you wish me to do, and as I certainly do I *must* think of your pleasure in everything."

She looked at him, secretly acknowledging the truth of his words, yet much perplexed by them.

The house upon which they gazed, incomplete as were its surroundings, deserved all Drusilla's praise.

It was a charming little cottage ornée, which, if the truth may be spoken, was much more suitable as the home of a fresh young bride than the resting-place of a worn-out old worldling. It was built after no particular plan, and therefore perhaps all the more picturesque and pleasing in its aspect. It was so irregularly and fantastically erected as to defy all manner of description. From the outside it seemed an eccentric collection of low walls and steep roofs, gable ends, twisted chimneys, hanging balconies, bay-windows, porches, verandas, and so forth. Its dark gray stone walls and dark green Venetian shutters and pillars and cornices, so harmonized in hue with the colors of the wintry woods, as at a short distance to mingle with them and be indistinguishable from them. Such was the outside of Drusilla's little home.

The inside was a collection of hexagon shaped halls, chambers, parlors, quaint closets, cosy recesses and sunny nooks.

"Now I will take you round and show you the stable and the cow-house," said Alexander, drawing his wife's arm within his own, and leading her around to the rear of the house where, in a neat and well kept stable, he showed her a pretty pair of gray ponies and a neat little carriage.

She looked up in his face to thank him with her eyes, but when she would have spoken, he stopped her with a kiss.

Then he took her to an adjoining compartment of the same building, and showed her a white cow with a young calf beside her.

"I cannot thank you enough; no, I cannot—not only for all that you have given me, but for the *beauty* of every object and every living creature you have placed around me—the beautiful house and furniture, the beautiful carriage and ponies, the pretty white cow and calf. Dear Alexander, I thank you so much for all the beauty with which you have blessed my home," smiled and faltered Drusilla, in a voice broken by happy emotions.

"Beauty! why who was it that, just now, begged and prayed me not to love her for her beauty?" asked Alexander, quizzingly.

"It was I, of course," said Drusilla, blushing and laughing, "but that was because I wished you to love me for something deeper and more lasting."

"And so I do, darling; but come—confess that you like beautiful things—that you like even *me* better for not being ill-looking."

"Oh, Alexander, not you! it was never your looks, although I like you to be handsome. But oh, dear Alick, if you were to be maimed by accident or marked by illness, I should love you quite as much as I do now, and even more tenderly, I think, as I know I shall love you when you are old and gray."

"Bah! I would rather die than grow old and gray; but the time for that is far enough off, thank Heaven!" said Alexander, as he led her back into the house.

He took her into the drawing-room and showed her three musical instruments, each of the very best quality—a piano, a harp and a guitar. Upon a stand near was a collection of old standard music, and of all the best new pieces out.

I suppose no one but a monomaniac in music can understand the delight of sitting down and trying the tone of a new instrument of the very best order.

Drusilla placed herself at the piano, and ran her fingers up and down the keys to test its powers. And then she turned over her music and sang song after song, for hour after hour, without weariness. And Alexander leaned over her, and listened to her without flagging.

When at length she arose from the piano, he led her from the drawing-room and across the hexagon hall to an opposite room, fitted up as a library. Here, in the elegant bookcases, were collected some of the best standard works in English, French and German, also some choice Latin and Greek volumes, and a few of the most popular publications of the day.

Here were neat writing desks, easy reading chairs, soft foot cushions, and every means and appliance of comfort and luxury.

And on the walls were a few very choice pictures, and on

stands stood statuettes and vases and other gems of art, to please a cultivated taste.

"No words—you leave me no words to thank you for all these blessings," Drusilla murmured.

"I tell you they are all mine as you are mine, so there are no words wanted for thanks," smiled Alexander.

"Ah! but I know you did all this for me; I feel it and I must say it, Alick, dear Alick," she murmured, with tears of love and joy in her eyes.

All the time they were in the library they heard the songs of birds—a sound so unusual in that wintry season, that Drusilla had looked up once or twice with a startled expression; but as Alexander had only smiled at her surprise without attempting to gratify her unspoken curiosity she forbore to ask him questions, and waited until he should explain the mystery.

"Come now," he said, "I have something else to show you."

And he led her down to the lower end of the room, to a green curtain that hung from ceiling to floor, and from side to side, and corresponded, except in color, with that one which divided the dining-room from the drawing-room.

He drew aside this curtain and revealed a scene of enchantment.

It was a room of crystal glass, in gilded sashes, and it was filled with the rarest and most beautiful exotic plants, most of them in full bloom. Among these plants hung large gilded cages, in which were birds of the most brilliant plumage and the sweetest notes, whose songs filled all the sunny and perfumed air with melody.

Birds and flowers of all the objects in nature had always been Drusilla's especial delight. Her love of them might have been called a passion. And it had never been gratified until now. And here she had them of the most beautiful sorts, gathered in one splendid crystal room like a fairy palace. And as she looked a smile of rapture lighted up her lovely face, and then she turned towards the giver of all these and tried to utter her feelings; but instead of speaking, she burst into tears, threw herself in his arms, and sobbed on his bosom.

He had overwhelmed her with his gifts as he had done once before.

Now smilingly he caressed and soothed her, until she lifted up her head, dashed away her tears, and said, laughing:

"'I am a fool to weep at what I am glad of,' as Juliet, or Lady Macbeth, or Regan, or Goneril, or some one of Shakspeare's women says."

"Miranda, my love; it was Miranda. Never misquote Shakspeare; never even in your most confidential communications to your most intimate friends; never even in soliloquy and in solitude!" said Alexander, shaking his head in mock gravity.

"Indeed I wasn't sure it *was* in Shakspeare," said Drusilla.

"And now to the dining-room. I think we have earned an appetite for dinner," smiled Alexander, drawing her arm within his own, and leading her from the library.

This evening was spent in the drawing-room, where tea was served.

And so ended the second day of their bright honeymoon.

CHAPTER XV.

CLOUDLESS JOYS.

Oh, pleasant was her welcome kiss,
When day's turmoil was o'er,
And sweet the music of her step,
That met him at the door.—DRAKE.

FOR the first few days of their honeymoon, the bridegroom stayed home with his bride—walking, riding, or playing with her in the mornings, and reading, singing, or conversing with her in the evenings.

On Sunday, she asked him to take her to church, and he took her to the nearest one of the sect to which she belonged.

On Monday he took her into the city, to show her the public buildings and other objects of interest.

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, they remained quietly at home. The weather was very inclement. It

had been raining three days, and the roads were very bad.

Alexander spent the time indoors, in writing letters, examining accounts, and reading to Drusilla, while she worked with her needle. But the gay young man of the world found this life "slow."

On the third dull afternoon that the poor little bride had tried her best to enliven, while he sat reading to her as she sewed, he suddenly threw the book from him, got up yawned, walked up and down the room a few turns, looked out of the window at the drizzling rain and gloomy sky, and then turning to his companion, said:

"Drusa, the weather is infernal, but—the German Opera is in Washington, and our carriage is close. So what do you say to braving the rain and the wind to see *Der Freichutz* by the best troupe of artists that has ever appeared in the city."

She looked up quickly, and saw that he was anxious to go. She replied:

"I shall be delighted, Alick."

"You are not afraid of taking cold?"

"Not a bit! I would go through Noah's Flood to hear good music."

"That's my girl! You're a brick. I'm so glad you are not one of the timid or sickly sort. That little pale face of yours is very deceptive, Drusa. One would think to look at you that you were very delicate, but I never saw or heard of your being sick in my life."

"Except when I cried myself into a fit of illness, when you went to Europe, Alick. Oh, I hope I shall never have another such a trouble as that, as long as I live in this world. I remember it yet. Alick, dear, I would rather die than lose you for another two years," she said with much feeling.

"Little goose! I'm not worth a tenth, a hundredth, no, not a thousandth part of the love you bestow on me," he answered laughing.

"Oh, Alick, I would not permit any one but yourself to say such things of you. And I—I won't let you say them either, sir; so there, now!"

"Come, run away and get ready. I'll order the carriage."

And Drusilla tripped up-stairs to make her toilet. And

Alexander sauntered out of the room to give directions to his factotum.

In less than half an hour Drusilla came down, dressed for the evening.

The carriage was at the door.

"I have no tickets, of course; and consequently no reserved seats. But, on such an inclement night as this, I do not doubt that we shall be able to obtain good places," said Alexander, as he handed her into the carriage.

The roads were heavy, and so, a drive, that in good weather could have been easily accomplished in thirty minutes, occupied them for forty-five.

It was rather late when they reached the National Theatre, where the opera troupe were performing.

The house was full, and the play had commenced.

Upon inquiry at the ticket-office, Alexander ascertained that there were no good seats to be had, with the exception of those in a stage box, that happened to be disengaged.

Alexander at once took that, and guided by an usher, led his companion thither.

On taking her seat in the box, Drusilla's eyes fell upon what seemed to her a scene of enchantment.

The house was filled with a fashionable and well-dressed audience, and the opera was in full play. Drusilla had never been in an opera before. The Christmas pantomimes of her childhood comprised the whole of her experiences in the theatrical line. Her artistic eye and ear at once appealed to, she gazed with curiosity and interest, and listened with wonder and delight.

Her attention was fixed upon the stage, but her bridegroom's was fixed upon her. As once before, in her childhood, he had looked through her eyes, and heard through her ears, and derived more pleasure from *her* pleasure, than from the performance on the stage, so now he experienced a keener delight in watching and wondering at

"The mind, the music breathing from her face,"

than in listening to the most divine strains of the singer, who was charming the whole house.

How beautiful she looked in her enthusiasm! She was lovely always, even when pale and still, but now her lips

and cheeks glowed with that delicate, transparent fire, kindled of emotion, and her eyes beamed with light, her whole countenance was radiant and inspired

He was so much absorbed in contemplating her, that he did not perceive she had attracted and was receiving a great deal of attention from other quarters of the house. Next to the figures on the stage, the occupants of the "private" boxes have the most conspicuous position; and if there is a new beauty among them, she is sure to be discovered and stared at. Alexander had not thought of this, or perhaps he would not have exhibited his little beauty in a private box.

At the end of the second act of the opera, however, he was unpleasantly reminded of the fact. The box door opened, and one of his gentleman acquaintances came in.

Alexander arose and shook hands with him, but did not ask him to be seated, although there were two spare chairs; and did not present him to Drusilla, although the visitor looked enquiringly at her, and Drusilla glanced timidly in return.

Before this gentleman left the box, another came, and then another, until the little place was full. And Alexander chatted gaily with them all, but presented not one of them to Drusilla.

When the curtain arose for the third act, they all bowed and withdrew.

And Drusilla's whole attention was once more given to the stage, and Alexander's to her.

Yet, now that his notice had been attracted to the fact, he could not help seeing that several opera glasses were still levelled at his box.

"I will never bring her here again," he muttered to himself, frowning with a strangely blended feeling of gratified pride in the admiration his beautiful bride had unconsciously excited, and of morose jealousy that other eyes should gaze on her so publicly at will. There was something of the sultan in Mr. Lyon's selfish nature, and he felt as if he would have liked to shut up his little beauty from all the world forever.

He was heartily glad when the play was over. And while the performers were still courtesying and bowing, and the curtain was slowly rolling down, he hurried Dru-

silla up from her seat, wrapped her cloak around her, and took her off lest some of his unwelcome visitors should meet them on their way out.

When they were seated in their carriage, and the horses were moving at a smart trot down Pennsylvania avenue toward Seventh street, Alexander turned to his now quiet companion, and said:

"You were very much pleased, my little love?"

"Oh, more than that; I have been in Heaven!" she aspirated.

"You little enthusiast! But what makes you so quiet now?"

"I have scarcely got back to earth, I suppose."

"Drusa, you saw those visitors that came into our box?"

"Yes; they were friends of yours, and looked as if they expected you to introduce them to me."

"Yes, I dare say they did; but, Drusilla, did you wish me to do so?"

"I? I had no wish on the subject. But any friends of yours, Alick, would be always most welcome to my acquaintance."

"Not so, little one. A man may have many friends that he would not like to present to his wife. And these —were roughs."

"'Roughs?'"

"Rude, unbroken colts, unfit for a gentlewoman's society. But let them pass. I only wished to explain why I did not introduce them to you. Now as to the entertainment of the evening. How did you like Xitz?" he inquired, mentioning the tenor of the troupe.

Drusilla went off into raptures over the tenor.

And they talked of the opera and of nothing else until they reached home.

Lights from the windows were gleaming through the trees as they drove up to the house.

"How bright and cheerful our little home looks," said Drusilla, as Alexander lifted her from the carriage.

"I am glad you think so, love," he whispered.

Pina opened the door, and smilingly admitted them.

She took her mistress's hood and cloak, while her master relieved himself of his cap and overcoat,

And then she opened the drawingroom door where a fine fire was burning. And while they stood and warmed themselves before its blaze she drew aside the crimson curtain that shut off the dining-room, and revealed an elegant little supper set out in readiness.

And the evening closed as pleasantly as it had commenced.

Alexander loved Drusilla; there is no doubt of that. But as the days wore on he found life alone with her rather dull. They had been married a fortnight before he left her alone for a day. But on a certain morning he had his horse saddled to ride in to Washington "to get the papers," he said, and to make arrangements for having them sent to him every day. As he kissed Drusilla good-by he added that he should be back as soon as possible.

She begged that he would not hurry himself for her sake. She said she would occupy her time with dressmaking during his absence.

"But you will be quite alone, my poor little love," he said.

"I shall have pleasant thoughts for company," she answered; and she added: "Dear Alick, I do not wish to be a hamper to your motions; never think of me as any obstacle to your freedom. Please don't."

"As if I ever thought of anything else but you!" replied the bridegroom, who was still a lover. And he kissed her again and rode away.

As soon as Alick reached the city he put his horse up at a livery stable, and gave himself a holiday by sauntering up and down Pennsylvania avenue, and lounging into the various reading-rooms of the hotels.

In one of them he heard that an exciting polemic duel was to come off that day in the Senate Chamber between two distinguished Senators of opposite parties in politics. Mr. W. of Massachusetts was expected to make a speech, which Mr. C. of South Carolina was expected to answer.

And Alexander determined to go with the crowd and hear them.

He lost no time in hurrying to the Capitol and making his way to the gallery of the Senate.

It was the very height of the Washington season, and the city was as usual every winter, filled to overflowing

As many of the élite as could be pressed into that very limited space was crowded into the gallery of the Senate Chamber.

Alexander with much difficulty made his way into this crowd. But Mr. Lyon was epicurean rather than intellectual and would not endure personal discomfort for the sake of hearing the grandest burst of eloquence that ever thunderstruck the world. So after experiencing something of heat, pressure, and suffocation he turned his back upon the "Godlike," and pushed his way through the crowd in the gallery to the crowd outside who were trying to get in, and so slowly progressed to the library, were the "population" was thinner and the air purer.

He walked up to a table where several ladies and gentlemen were gathered to look at some new illustrated volumes that lay there for inspection.

One of the ladies turned around, and he found himself face to face with his Cousin Anna.

"*Good gracious, Alick*, who on earth would have expected to see you here!" she exclaimed in astonishment, as she offered her hand.

He turned red and pale; took and pressed the offered hand, and then recovered himself and answered:

"Or *you*, Anna. I thought you were still at Old Lyon Hall."

"And I thought you were at Richmond, or rather I had hoped you were by this time."

"My uncle is here with you, of course," said Alexander, wishing to avoid a topic which he saw upon the lips of his cousin.

"Oh, yes, certainly, my grandfather is here. Our coming was his act. He fancied—it was only fancy—that my health and spirits were drooping in the country, and that I needed a change, and so he brought me to Washington. Of course being in mourning, we do not go to balls, only to receptions where there is no dancing. But how is it that you are here? Why are you not in Richmond?"

"I hope my uncle is quite well?" said Alexander, persistently ignoring her questions.

"Yes, quite. I was asking you why——"

"I do not see him; he is not with you this morning."

"No; he is on the floor of the Senate Chamber. But, Alexander, I asked you why you are here."

"Oh, I too, needed a change," he answered, smiling.

"Ah! but surely, Alexander, can you know——By the way, what have you been doing with yourself for the last month in which we have not heard from you?"

"Here is a catechism! Wandering about to be sure; trying to shake off a very disagreeable companion—meaning myself."

While he spoke she was regarding him with a very grave face; but there was more of pity than rebuke in its expression.

"Alick, you *cannot* know. When did you hear from your home?"

"Not for four or five weeks."

"Then you *don't* know. Oh, Alick, do you think it was right to leave your home without giving your address, in case anything should happen to require your presence. Oh, Alick!"

"Anna, since the death of my dear father and mother, in addition to the grief for their loss I have been oppressed with the cares of the estate. I wished to get rid of trouble for a little while. And so, to prevent old Dorset from writing to me about business, I came away without leaving my address."

"And suppose, Alick, something of importance should have required your attention in the meantime? Some matter of life or death?"

"Well, thank Heaven, no such matter has turned up. I see you before me in health and beauty. And I hear you say that my uncle is quite well."

"And yet something has happened. Come with me, Alick, to the window yonder," said Anna, in a low voice, as she walked off to a distant part of the room.

"Have you really heard nothing from Dorset, Alick?" she inquired, when they stood together at some distance from every one else in the library.

"No; I hope nothing has happened to the poor old fellow?" said Alexander, uneasily.

"Oh, no, not to him, or to any of the servants. Oh, Alick, I am so sorry to be the first to tell you."

"Of what in the name of Heaven, Anna, since you

and your grandfather, and even old Dorset and the servants are well."

"Was there no one else in whom you took an interest?" she gravely inquired.

"Richard Hammond? Poor Dick! Surely no misfortune——"

"No, no misfortune has befallen Dick; and neither do I give you credit for caring a straw whether there has or has not. Nothing has happened to Dick but the inheritance of a large fortune from a bachelor uncle in Brazil, which has caused my grandfather to look on him with more tolerant eyes."

"I am very glad of Dick's good fortune."

"I do not give you credit for caring a fig for his fortune, good or bad. But oh, Alick, I am grieved for you. Was there no one else, no one else you cared for, left at home?"

"Indeed, I cannot think of any other creature in whom I could be expected to take so deep an interest."

"Not—poor little Drusilla?"

Alexander gave a great guilty start and stood gazing at his cousin. Drusilla had not been associated in his mind with any one left at home; so he had had no suspicion that Anna spoke of her; and now he wondered whether Anna had any inkling of the truth. He doubted only an instant, and then he felt sure by her words, looks and manners that she had not. Yet he wished to know everything she had to say of Drusilla's flight.

"What of her?" he inquired.

"Oh, Alick, poor little thing! I grieve so much to tell you. But after you left home, it seems she became moody, silent, absent, and altogether queer. She took to wandering off every day by herself. Dorset and Molly thought that she was going deranged as her poor mother had gone. So they watched her closely. But one day, about a fortnight after you left home, she eluded their vigilance and disappeared from the house. And though the most diligent search was made for her, she could not be found."

Anna paused, and Alexander tried to look as much shocked as she evidently expected him to be; but he could not yet trust himself to make any comment.

"Old Dorset, nearly beside himself with distress, wrote to my grandfather, telling him of what had occurred, and

asking for your address that he might communicate the matter to you. Of course, not knowing it, my grandfather could not give it. But I did hope the old man had discovered your whereabouts and written to you."

"No, he has not. Dear me! Poor girl, poor girl! how shocking! And no trace has been discovered of her yet?" said Alexander, acting grief and anxiety as well as any ordinary stage-player could.

"None that I knew of."

"Bless my life, how dreadful! I must put advertisements in all the papers and employ the detectives. What motive does old Dorset assign to her act of leaving her home?"

"Partial derangement, I tell you, inherited from her mother."

"Poor child! poor child! I will have inquiries set on foot immediately. But—here comes General Lyon," said Alexander, glad to have a diversion from the very embarrassing subject of Drusilla.

In fact, at that moment the old soldier entered the library, looking to the right and left in search of his granddaughter.

Attended by Alexander, she went to meet him.

"Well, my dear, ready to go back to our hotel?—Ah, Alexander, how do you do, my boy? Glad to see you. How long have you been here?" he asked, cordially shaking hands with his nephew.

"I reached the city early this morning," said Alexander, speaking the *literal* truth, but giving a false impression, as he meant to do.

"Ah! by the first train, eh?" exclaimed the old man, jumping to the obvious conclusion. "But where do you hang out, eh, my boy?"

"I have not taken rooms yet," replied Alexander, who found that he needed all his presence of mind to answer these unexpected questions without betraying himself on the one hand and perjuring himself on the other.

"Ah! left all your luggage at the station, eh? Well, I would advise you to take rooms at our hotel. We are pretty comfortable there?"

"How long do you propose to stay here, sir?" inquired the young man.

"Oh, the rest of the season, I suppose."

Here was a dilemma. Of course, Alexander might have ended all his embarrassments by candidly confessing his marriage with Drusilla. And why did he not do so? Simply because loving and admiring his young bride, as he certainly did, he was nevertheless ashamed of having wedded his housekeeper's daughter; and he lacked moral courage to face the astonishment of his cousin and the indignation of his uncle, and to defend his own act and stand by his own wife.

Ah! but there is a sort of pride that is below contempt.

While Alexander was wondering what he should do to get out of his perplexities, his uncle changed the subject back to the other dangerous theme by saying:

"Ah, by the way, that was a sad thing—the fate of poor little Drusilla."

"Very sad, indeed, sir," replied Alexander, lugubriously.

"It must have shocked you terribly," said the old soldier.

"Ah!" exclaimed Alexander.

"Well, well, it can't be helped, I suppose."

"I shall do all I can in the premises, sir."

"Oh, no doubt, no doubt. Come, my dear Anna, let us get on. Alick, come home with us to dinner."

Alexander would have made excuses. He was not dressed for dinner, he said. He had no means of making his toilet.

But his uncle cut him short.

"Nonsense, man, nonsense. Who expects you to be in full dress to-day? You are a traveler, just arrived in the city. You have left your luggage at the station, and you have not even engaged rooms yet. Besides—at a hotel-table, who cares how you are dressed? Come along. There! give Anna your arm, and take her to the carriage."

What could Alick do?

He offered his arm to his cousin and led her down the many broad steps leading to the east front of the capitol, where the carriage waited. He handed her carefully in to her cushioned seat, and bowed and attempted some excuse for leaving her.

But Anna, seized with some inexplicable whim, perhaps

inspired by the Spirit of Evil for his torment, would not let him off; but insisted upon his entering and taking a seat beside her.

With a suppressed groan, Alexander obeyed.

The old soldier followed them into the carriage.

When he was comfortably seated and the horses had started, he rubbed his hands and said:

"This is fortunate. I needed some one whom I could trust, to take Anna out in the evening. Who so proper an escort as her betrothed husband? Now this evening there is to be a grand reception at the Executive Mansion. I do not feel well enough to go out at night, so I must impress you into the service my boy."

"I should be most happy, sir," said the young man, actually trembling under his accumulating embarrassment. "I should indeed be delighted, but——"

"But what?—Oh, nonsense, you cannot make any excuse about your toilet in this case; there is plenty of time to get your luggage from the station, and get yourself up for the evening in the most unexceptionable style."

"Yes, sir, but——"

"But what, again? You cannot possibly have any other engagement. You have been in the city too short a time. Alexander, what has come to you? You are not like yourself at all. I really think your betrothed has a reason to feel piqued," said the old man, gravely.

"I beg your pardon and hers, sir—I am—if I must speak the truth, a little upset upon the subject of that poor girl," said Alexander, in explanation, again speaking the literal truth, while intentionally giving a wrong impression.

"Oh exactly, to be sure, my dear boy, and it does you credit. I am certain I ought to beg *your* pardon, now, for doing injustice to your good feelings. But Alick, my lad, your compassion for that poor child need not prevent you from ordinary social pleasures. You really must escort your cousin to the President's reception to-night."

"My dear grandfather," put in Anna, "I will not, if you please, have any gentleman pressed into my service against his will, even though that gentleman should be my affianced husband. Dick is in Washington. He called on me this morning, and begged leave to attend me to the

White House this evening. I told him I would hold his proposal in reserve, and let him know in time."

Now what was there in the name of his old rival, poor Dick, that should have raised Alexander's jealousy? Mr Lyon was a married man, and had no right to feel annoyed at the idea of Richard Hammond becoming the escort of his cousin. Nevertheless he *did* feel annoyed, partly, perhaps, because he had once considered Anna his own property, and however lightly he had valued the possession, he could not, even now, see her pass over to another without a secret feeling of rage and jealousy; and so he hesitated to answer:

"No, my dear cousin; if you please, I claim the right of attending you in person I cannot resign that right to Mr. Hammond."

"And *I* claim the right of choosing my own escort," said Anna, proudly.

Alexander bowed.

"Girl and boy, I will have no lovers' quarrels here. Anna, you should feel that there is an impropriety in an engaged young lady accepting the attentions of another gentleman, when her betrothed is anxious to show her those attentions himself. Alexander, you are to take Anna to the reception this evening. Young people, both see that you obey me. *Some* respect should be paid to my gray head and my eighty years," said the old soldier, with dignity.

Both the young people bowed and acquiesced. And so it was settled that Alexander should attend Anna to the reception of the evening.

CHAPTER XVI.

A QUEEN OF FASHION.

Here high-born men were proud to wait,
And beauty watched to imitate
Her gentle voice, her lovely mien,
And gather from her air and gait
The graces of its queen.—BRYON.

ALEXANDER went with his uncle and cousin to their hotel.

"And now, my boy," said the old gentleman, after he had dismissed the carriage and taken his granddaughter into the private entrance, "let us lose no time in going to the office and securing your rooms. Guests are arriving by every train, and the house is in a fair way of being crowded if it is not so already. Indeed, I fear you may not, even now, be able to obtain rooms here."

"Heaven grant I may not!" was the fervent, though silent, aspiration of Mr. Lyon, who was almost at his wits' ends with perplexity.

In the strong hope that there was no room to be had, he let his uncle drag him along to the counter of the office which was crowded with applicants for accommodations. It was some minutes before General Lyon could get audience with the sorely embarrassed clerk of the house. When he did, it was to receive the answer that the crowded state of the office led him to anticipate.

There was not a room nor a half a room, nor a bed nor a half a bed, at the disposal of the house.

"I thought so. Well, Alick, I am sorry; but you must try to get rooms as near us as possible. I don't think the Blank House is full yet. It is too far up town for strangers. But hark ye! it will be full in an hour from this time. 'Make hay while the sun shines.' Run, now; jump into a cab and drive for life to the Blank, and engage your rooms before this crowd gets there and fills the house."

Again, what could Alexander do? He saw at a glance that he must ostensibly live at Washington—that he

must have rooms at some hotel, though he might never, or very seldom, occupy them. And he was only too glad that he was not obliged to have rooms in the same house with his uncle, and so be always under the old gentleman's eye.

He thanked General Lyon for his advice, and said that he should avail himself of it.

And he went out and jumped into the first cab that offered, and drove to the Blank House, where he happened to be in time to engage the only bedroom at the disposal of the proprietor.

He took the key of his room, which he meant only to occupy on his occasional visits to the city, and then he drove to the "establishment" of a fashionable tailor and gentleman's outfitter, and he suited himself with a full evening dress, including linen, gloves, perfumery, et cetera. These he ordered to be sent to his room at the Blank House.

"I am booked for his Excellency's reception this evening, and so it will be considerably after midnight before I can hope to get back to Cedarwood. Poor little Drusa! I hope she won't be anxious, and sit up and lose her rest," he said, as he hurried back to his hotel to make his toilet for the evening.

While waiting for his parcel from the tailor's he lounged into the reading room, and took up one of the evening papers; but its columns could scarcely engage his attention, which was wholly engrossed by his embarrassments.

"It is now near sunset," so ran his thoughts, "and poor little soul! she has been watching for me for hours, is watching for me at this moment, and will watch for me for hours longer, until long after midnight, tormented by nobody knows how many fears and fancies concerning me. Plague take the old man! what brought him bothering to Washington just at this time?" very irreverently muttered Mr. Lyon to himself, as his eyes ran over the news items of the paper without taking cognizance of their meaning.

His ostensible reading and his real reverie was rudely interrupted by the clap of a hand upon his shoulder, and the ring of a laugh in his ear.

He turned sharply around and recognized Captain Red-

ing and Lieutenant Harpe, two young officers of the army, who had been among the visitors to his box on the evening when he had taken Drusilla to the German Opera.

He bowed coldly in rebuke to their laughter, but they took no offence.

"Hey, old boy! so here you are at last!" said Reding.

"We have been looking for you for days—ever since we saw you at the German Opera with that pretty little girl," said Harpe.

"Where have you been hiding yourself all this time?" inquired Reding.

"And above all, where have you hidden that little beauty, you churlish fellow?" added Harpe.

"You never presented us to her," said Reding.

"Ah! we owe you one for that," added Harpe.

"Gentleman," answered Mr. Lyon, slowly and coldly collecting his thoughts, "if you will be good enough to speak, one at a time, and forbear a second question until a first is answered, perhaps I may be able to satisfy your curiosity. On the evening to which you allude I happened to be passing through Washington, having in my charge the daughter of a clergyman. She was the very young lady whom you saw with me at the opera. I made no stay in the city beyond that evening; but took my young charge immediately to her home."

And in this statement also Mr. Lyon told something near the literal truth, while intentionally giving a false impression.

"Ah, well," said Reding, "but why did you not introduce us to the little beauty?"

"If you must have it, I did not think two gay young blades like yourselves very desirable acquaintances for a clergyman's daughter," said Mr. Lyon.

"And you were!—oh! oh! oh!" laughed Reding.

"Deuce take it, what do you mean by that, Alick?" inquired Mr. Harpe.

"Nothing against your honor, gentlemen. If my charge for the evening had been any other young lady in the world, I would have presented you to her."

"Much obliged," said Reding; "but to tell you the truth, Lyon, whether you like it or not, the young person in question did not impress us as being a young lady."

"What do you mean by *that?*" exclaimed Mr. Lyon, in a low, stern voice, as he glared at the speaker.

"Oh, nothing against *her* honor—nothing in the world. I mean simply that the little creature seemed to us to be, not exactly of 'low birth,' but of 'humble parentage,' as the phrase goes. She had not the manners of good society," answered Reding.

"Heaven forbid she ever should have," said Alexander, firmly. And yet the criticism galled him; all the more, perhaps, because he felt it to be the truth His lovely young wife had not, as these critics said, the manners of "good society." Yet it was hard to say what she lacked. Whatever it was, it was something in which Miss Anna Lyon, a very queen in society, excelled. What was it, then? Drusilla was pretty, graceful, well-educated, and well-dressed. She excelled in many accomplishments, and was conversant with the history of the past and the literature of the present, and she conversed intelligently upon all these. She was sweet, gentle and courteous in her deportment to all persons. What then did she lack? I will tell you—self-esteem and self-possession—both of which qualities are in high favor in "good society." Drusilla's manner was that of one who had always occupied a subordinate position by living among her superiors. She had too little of assurance and too much of deference.

And this delicate and retiring manner, which had been one of her sweetest charms in the eyes of her lover, now suddenly became objectionable in the estimation of her husband.

"No," he muttered to himself, "she has *not* the air of a lady; she has the air of a maid-servant. Poor little thing! I fear I shall never be able to introduce her."

"No offence, I hope, Alick!" said young Harpe, good-humoredly, noticing Mr. Lyon's gloomy abstraction.

"None in the world," answered Alexander.

"Because, if there should be, I am ready to fight or apologize, or to give you any sort of satisfaction you may please to demand," laughed the young lieutenant.

"I ask as a favor that you will drop the subject of this young lady; for she is a lady by position, if not—according to your judgment—in manners. And now, gentlemen, as I have an engagement, I must wish you good

evening," said Mr. Lyon, bowing and withdrawing from their proximity.

"No," he said, as he went slowly up to his room, "I must not bring Drusilla into public again. Her beauty excites attention and her simplicity provokes criticism, and both raise questions difficult to meet. Poor little Drusa, she must always be a hidden treasure, a secret 'well-spring of joy' to me. Well, she will not object to that, and she will be all the lovelier and the sweeter for this seclusion," he added, in some self-satisfaction, as he entered his room and began to dress for the evening.

As soon as he was ready he went down to the dining-room, took a single cup of strong tea, and then passed out to the side-walk and called the best-looking cab that he saw upon the stand.

A short drive took him to the hotel where his uncle and cousin were stopping. He was shown up into their private parlor, where they were awaiting him.

"You are late, Alick," said Anna, advancing from the fire to meet him half way across the room.

"I had to wait for my parcels," replied Alexander, bowing and smiling apologetically.

"Oh, your luggage from the railway station? Well, the porters *are* slow, that is certain; but then they have so much to do," said old General Lyon, drawing a natural inference.

Alexander bowed in an absent sort of a manner, but did not reply. He was gazing at his cousin. How grandly beautiful she looked, how graceful, how stately! Ah! *she* had the air, not only of "good society," but of the best society! And that upstart puppy, that good for nothing Dick Hammond, to aspire to her. Ugh!

Such was the tenor of Mr. Alexander's thoughts as he stood for a moment contemplating his beautiful and imperious-looking cousin. In fact, Anna was at an age when every season added to her beauty. Always well-looking, she had never in her life looked so well as to-night.

She wore a deep mourning full dress of black crape, over a black silk. It was made with a low corsage and short sleeves; both sleeves and corsage were edged with a narrow trimming of fine white tulle; and the fairness of her perfect neck and arms were set off by a necklace

and bracelets of jet. Her golden auburn hair was in plain rolls at the back of her head, and a band of jet above her forehead was its only ornament. This simple mourning dress set off her blond beauty more completely than the most elaborate toilet could have done.

"I am ready, Alick. What are you waiting for?" she inquired, breaking in upon the spell that bound him.

"Nothing," he answered, with a slight start. "I am at your service this instant."

And he stepped towards her, and fastened the glove on the hand that she held out to him. And then he wrapped her opera cloak carefully around her shoulders, tied the little hood under her chin, drew her arm within his own, and led her from the room down to the carriage, wondering all the way how it was that his cousin Anna, whom he had only known as a rather pretty girl so long, should so suddenly have become so beautiful in his eyes.

Ah! Mr. Lyon, she had grown beautiful to you only in becoming unattainable by you. A common case.

Old General Lyon followed them closely, and saw Alick put Anna into her seat, and tuck her wrappings carefully around her, and then get in and place himself beside her.

"Take care of her, Alick; the night is growing colder," said the old gentleman.

"I shall take the best care of her, sir," replied Alexander.

"Anna, mind you are not to stay late," said Anna's grandfather.

"'Late?'—Who stays late at a President's reception? Everybody—that is, almost everybody, leaves before twelve. I shall be back by half-past eleven, sir. It is only to make one's bow or courtesy to his Excellency in the Reception Room, and walk once or twice through the East Room, and come away," laughed Anna.

"Very well, I shall sit up for you," said General Lyon, by way of sealing the bargain, as he retreated from the carriage door.

The coachman put up the steps, clapped to the door, mounted his box, and drove off.

CHAPTER XVII.

MORAL MADNESS.

And she was all forgotten,
Amid the dazzling hall,
Amid the thundering music,
And maddening carnival.—ANON.

"I WAS so upset by what you told me, Anna, that I really forgot to ask you how long you have been in the city," said Alexander, as soon as the horses were in motion.

"We have been here just four days," answered Miss Lyon.

"You have not been out much?"

"No; my grandfather has a crotchet that one must make one's first appearence in public at the President's reception. This is the first one that has been held since our arrival, and consequently the first evening that I have been out."

"I am very fortunate in being here to go with you," said Alexander, this time speaking, to his shame, quite truly; for he *was* glad to escort his beautiful cousin, if only to prevent Richard Hammond from doing so.

"Thanks," she answered, very coldly, as if not believing his statement, or not valuing it.

The very short distance between the hotel they had left and the palace to which they were going was soon accomplished, and the carriage was drawn up in the rear of some fifty others that occupied the drive leading to the doors of the Executive mansion.

"There seems to be a great crowd here to-night," said Alexander, while they waited their turn to drive up to the door.

"There is always a crowd here in the month of February I believe. It is in this month that the city is full of strangers—literally *full*, Alick," replied Anna.

It was twenty minutes before their carriage slowly

worked its way up before the main entrance of the mansion. Then Alexander handed his companion down from her seat, and took her up the broad steps leading into the front hall of the palace.

A President's reception has been described so often that there is no need of a description here.

The reception of this evening in its general features differed from none of its predecessors or its successors. There was the same crowd of carriages on the drive, the same stream of foot passengers on the walk, and the same crush of guests in the hall, in the cloak rooms, in the corridors, in the ante-rooms, in the audience-chamber, in the reception room, and in the east drawing-room.

Having each deposited their outer wrappings respectively in the gentlemen's and the ladies' cloak rooms, Alexander and Anna met at the door of the latter. He drew her arm within his own, and they soon found themselves in a crush of crinoline and broadcloth, and an atmosphere of patchoula frangipani, being forced forward through the corridor and the ante-room into the reception room. In due time they were pressed up to the presence of the President and his suite; but they had scarcely made their respective bow and courtesy, and touched his Excellency's hand, before they were carried onward through other rooms into the east drawing-room, where they found a little more space and freedom of motion.

A military band was playing a national march, to the measure of which nearly half the company were promenading in a procession around and around the saloon in a manner which, to a new comer, must have looked simply idiotic.

Others of the assembly were seated on the various sofas and divans that lined the walls of the room.

"Will you take a seat or a promenade?" inquired Alexander of his companion.

"Oh, a promenade, by all means," replied Anna. "I like the perfect vacuity of mind that falls upon one in that orbit."

Alexander drew her arm closer within his own, and they fell into the procession. Immediately before them walked a foreign minister, in his official costume, conducting a lady of high rank and fashion. Immediately be-

hind them came a general officer with a reigning belle upon his arm.

But the reign of this belle was over from this evening. Her successor had arrived.

Alexander and Anna had not made the circuit of the room twice, before he saw that his companion was, "the observed of all observers" in the place. He saw eye-glasses levelled at her; he heard whispered questions concerning her:

"Who is she, that beautiful girl in black crape and jet?"

And he heard the whispered answers:

"A new debutante in the beau monde, I fancy." Or—

"I don't know, but that is young Lyon, of Richmond, who is escorting her."

"Splendid woman!"

"Magnificent creature!" Etc., etc., etc.

As he saw and heard all this, Alexander was strongly affected with contradictory emotions. If the beautiful girl by his side had been undisputably his own, he might have witnessed the sensation she created, with unmixed pride and pleasure. But he had by his own rash act, lost his own once exclusive right over her, and even put himself beyond the circle of ordinary aspirants for her favor. And now the universal admiration her beauty excited, aroused his dog-in-the-manger jealousy, rather than flattered his pride.

And, upon the whole, not liking the situation, he stooped and whispered to his cousin:

"Shall I lead you to a seat now, Anna?"

"If you please," she answered.

And he took her to a distant sofa, gave her the corner of it, and placed himself by her side.

But he gained nothing by the motion. On the contrary, he lost.

No sooner were they seated, than up came Richard Hammond, confident and smiling.

Anna received him with the utmost graciousness.

And he stood before her, talking and laughing with her very gaily.

Other gentleman friends, whom Anna had met on former occasions, came up and paid their respects, and

lingered near her. Her lady friends, a few of whom were present, also sought her out, and greeted her with much apparent gladness, and introduced *their* friends to her.

There was not room on the sofa for all these ladies. So Anna, deeming it discourteous to sit, where so many were standing, arose from her seat and stood up. And very soon a circle of the most distinguished men and the most brilliant women in the assembly was formed around her. And she seemed as a queen, receiving the homage of her court.

Presently, a general buzz in the crowd announced some interesting event, and before the little excitement subsided, the commanding form of the President was seen passing with his suite through the room.

In due course, he drew near the circle that surrounded Miss Lyon. On seeing that young beauty, he immediately passed through the circle that divided to admit him, and stood before her, holding out his hand, and saying, in a fatherly and familiar manner:

"How do you do, my dear? I am very glad to see you here, this evening. But where is my old friend, the General?"

Miss Lyon, with a deep courtesy, explained that her grandfather's precarious state of health deprived him of the honor of waiting on his Excellency.

The President expressed his regret at this. And then instead of passing on and dispensing his courtesies impartially among his guests, he lingered near the beautiful Anna, apparently as much fascinated by her charms, as the youngest man in his presence.

Full half an hour he stood talking with the beauty, and then reluctantly bowed his adieux, and immediately left the room.

This seemed the signal for the breaking up of the assembly.

And then followed other leave-takings, and the pressure through the corridors to the cloak rooms; and the confusion of tongues and of properties there, and the crush in the hall, and finally, the escape into pure, bracing air of the clear starlight night on the outside.

Alexander and Anna had to wait the turn of their carriage to drive up.

When, at length, they were comfortably seated within it, Alexander took out his watch, and said:

"Half-past twelve o'clock, and we promised to be home at half-past eleven. We have kept your grandfather waiting for an hour."

And he thought with compunction of one other whom he had kept waiting much more than an hour.

They were driven rapidly to the hotel. On their arrival, Alexander helped Anna out of the carriage and hurried her into the house, for the night was sharp.

They found General Lyon up, and expecting them, with much impatience.

"An hour behind time, Anna," he said.

"The President detained me in conversation, to the envy of all his other lady guests," laughed Anna.

"And you will forgive her delay," said Alexander, "in consequence of her conquest of our President. I consider it a great success.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DARK RIDE.

As yet 'tis midnight deep, the weary clouds,
Slow meeting, mingle into solemn gloom,
The while the drowsy world lies lost in sleep.—THOMSON.

As soon as Alexander Lyon had bid good night to his uncle and cousin, he hurried to the livery stable where he had left his horse, doubting that it would be open at so late an hour.

But it was not yet closed for the night; so upon Mr. Lyon's requirement one of the hostlers led out the horse, already saddled and bridled for the road.

"A dark night, sir," said this official, as he put the reins in the hands of the rider.

"Yes, and a dark road before me," replied the young gentleman.

"I hope for your sake it isn't a long one, sir."

"It is about five miles directly in the face of the wind," laughed Mr. Lyon.

"Sorry to hear it on your account, sir. The weather's

sharpish. The wind's got round to the northud and blows up pretty keenish. I wish you well at your journey's end, sir."

"Thank you. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

Alexander rode briskly away.

The night had grown bitterly cold; but his horse was fresh, and the rider thought that in such weather as this it would do the beast no harm to ride him hard. So he put him into a gallop, and soon left the gas-lighted, populous streets behind, and found himself in a dark and lonely road, where nothing was to be seen on either side but wintry woods and stubble fields, frozen brooks and straggling fences, and at long intervals some isolated dwelling.

At length he came to the old turnpike road leading through the woods towards his home. Here it was necessary to slacken speed; for the road was obstructed in many places, and the sky was very dark. So he drew rein at the entrance of the wood, and went on in a walk.

Notwithstanding the rapidity with which he had galloped over the five miles on the Seventh street road, his blood was half stagnant with the cold. His face, after smarting fiercely in the wind had lost all sense of feeling, and his hands were so numb that he could scarcely hold the bridle.

In addition to his physical discomfort he experienced much mental disturbance; and both together made him irritable and angry with himself and all the world. He was vexed with his uncle and cousin for being in Washington: with Richard Hammond for being always at hand to wait upon the beautiful heiress; with the old man in Brazil for dying and leaving the young spendthrift a fortune to recommend him; and, above all, with himself—not exactly for having married poor little Drusilla, but certainly for having by his own act put it out of his power to marry Anna; and *worse* than all, he was vexed in advance with his sweet little wife for the reception he felt sure she would give him when he should get home.

As he rode slowly through the woods he muttered to himself:

"I *know* she has been watching for me ever since noon

to-day, just because I said that I would be home then. She has been watching more than twelve hours. And now of course she has worried herself into a fit of intense anxiety, and most likely of illness besides. And there she is, no doubt, sitting with a pale face and red eyes, weeping over a smouldering fire, or an extinguished one. And she will meet me either with tears or sorrowful reproaches, or both! And, after all, what can I say for myself? Ah, bah, why will women take such things so much to heart? As if it was not enough to have been driven almost to mental distraction for her sake to-day, without being subjected to a scene to-night."

So growling within himself, the culprit rode slowly onward towards his home, and the nearer he got to it the more slowly he rode. He actually dreaded to meet Drusilla. But ride on slowly as he might, he could not put off forever the inevitable moment of arrival.

He soon saw the light of his home gleaming through the trees.

"There, I knew it!" he said to himself. "She *is* sitting up for me. There are the drawing-room windows all ablaze, and not a shutter closed. I had a faint hope that she might have gone to bed and cried herself to sleep, like a child as she is. But that's all over now. I've got to meet her with her red eyes and pale face. Confound it all, if she does get up a scene, I'll teach her a lesson she'll not soon forget!" he growled, trying to work himself up into a fit of rage in anticipation of the dreaded meeting. And yet, in the midst of all his efforts, his heart reproached him, and he relented a little towards his young wife. So now it was half in anger and half in compunction he drew near his home.

To give himself more time, to postpone the evil hour as long as possible, he first rode around to the stable to put up his horse himself.

And then he walked slowly to the house and knocked at the front door.

It flew open on the instant.

And there stood Drusilla, warm, glad, beaming with delight, radiant with welcome.

"I heard you come," she exclaimed—"I heard you ride around to the stable first, and so I was here ready to open

for you. But oh! how cold you look. Come in quickly," she said, taking him by his frozen hands and drawing him into the hall, and then closing and bolting the front door with her own nimble fingers.

For an instant he was so "taken aback" by her unexpected manner that he positively shrank from her. But the next moment he caught her and folded her to his bosom, as he murmured:

"My darling, darling child! My own dearest and best little Drusilla! how could I ever leave you! Heart of my heart, I will never leave you again for a whole day alone as long as I live in this world."

Rash vow! but he meant, at the moment, to keep it.

"Yes, that is what I am," she whispered—"heart of your heart. That is the sweetest and the truest name you ever called me. And now let me help you off with your overcoat, and then you can come into the drawing-room. There is a good fire."

He let her assist him in taking off his coat, and then he followed her into the drawing-room, where, as she had said, there was a good fire. His easy-chair was standing before it, and his furred slippers, were lying on the rug. And she had even brought down the boot-jack and laid it by the slippers.

Near the easy-chair stood a small round table, covered with a white damask cloth and laid for two persons.

A bright tea-kettle sat singing before the fire, and two small silver-covered dishes sat upon the hearth.

Seeing these simple preparations for his comfort and seeing the happy little creature who had made them, his heart smote him, first for having left her alone so late, and then for having entertained such hard thoughts of her.

"My darling child, how kind of you to do all this for me. But I am sorry you took the trouble," he said putting his arm around her and drawing her towards him where he sat in his resting chair.

"But suppose it made me happy to do so? Suppose it interested and amused me while waiting for you?" she asked.

"Ah, 'waiting' indeed! how long you have waited! I was in hopes that you had gone to bed and gone to sleep;

but when I saw the lights in the drawing-room windows, I knew that you were still up."

"I left the shutters open on purpose; I thought the light would look cheerful to you as you rode home through the woods."

"Dear heart, I ought to have known your loving motive as I came along; but I didn't. Ah, weren't you tired and sleepy with waiting?" he asked, as he drew her on his knee.

"Why no. It is not so *very* late, after all. And I have sat up many and many a night later than this only to finish a piece of needle-work I happened to be pleased with, or book I was interested in. And wouldn't I much sooner sit up to give my dearest a good warm supper after his long, cold ride?"

"My pet, my love, my darling, my—oh! what can I call you that will be good enough and dear enough for you?"

"Call me no hard names at all," she said, gaily, kissing him and springing from his lap. "But take off your boots while I put supper on the table."

Poor little Drusilla, these arrangements of hers were not according to the usages of "good society." Now, Anna Lyon would have let her husband go up to the top of the house in the cold before she would have permitted the bootjack to be brought into the drawing-room; and would have let him broken his fast in a dreary dining-room, or even gone hungry and thirsty to bed, before she would have allowed a kettle to be boiled, or a supper to be laid, in the drawing-room. And only a few hours before this Alexander had been lamenting in his heart his little wife's deficiencies in the manners of "good society." But now he was hungry and cold, and so,—flagrant as her breach of etiquette was, he did not seem to see it; he only realized that he was at this moment the happiest man, with the loveliest wife, in existence.

The supper was soon placed upon the table. Of the two silver covered dishes, one was found to contain a pair of nicely roasted partridges, and the other equally well roasted potatoes. Besides these, there was a fresh salad prepared, as he thought none but Drusilla could prepare it. And there were light biscuits and delicate

jellies and fresh fruits. And there were "schnapps" and lemons and loaf sugar, and all the materials for the hot punch that she thought he would like after his cold ride.

"Tell me, darling," said Alexander, after he had refreshed himself with these viands and was taking his ease between the table and the fire, "tell me how you have passed the lonely day. Were you very lonely and very anxious?"

"No," she answered, "I wasn't lonely. I was very busy, and I was thinking of you, and looking for you. And—yes, I am forced to admit that I was a little anxious."

"Poor child! I had promised to be home at noon. What did you think, and what did you do when I failed to come?"

"I thought something had detained you a little, and that you would be home very soon; and—I took a cup of tea and bit of toast for lunch," laughed Drusilla.

"And afterwards, when hour after hour passed, until our late dinner time came, what then?"

"Oh, I waited, expecting you every minute, until some hours past our dinner-time, and then—I ate my own dinner and had yours put away to be kept warm."

"Wise little girl."

"But I scarcely thought you would need the dinner. I fancied you were dining with some friend you had met in the city, and that *that* was keeping you."

"Little witch! And then when it grew dark and late?"

"Oh, *then* I grew a little nervous about you, and had ever so many foolish imaginations—that robbers had attacked you on the dark road, or that the horse had thrown you, or some other fatality had overtaken you; and so I was troubled with anxiety. But I reasoned and fought against that anxiety. I said to myself how much more likely it was that you were spending the evening with some friend; and then I recollected that the Italian Opera was in Washington, and I thought it most probable that you had gone there."

"Ah! well, and what next?"

"Why, about ten o'clock I called in Pina and told her

as the night was so sharp, and the ride so long, you would need a warm supper when you should arrive; and that we must get one up between us for you. And so Pina dressed the partridges, and I made the salad and set the table, and—that was how it was. And when all was ready I made Pina and Leo go to bed, because the poor creatures have to rise so early in the morning. And I told them to leave the shutters open, that the light might be a beacon to you on this dark night."

"My darling, darling child! I always knew that your nature was as sweet as a saint's, but I never knew how heavenly sweet, until to-night! You have given me such loving welcome! You have not even *looked* a reproach to me for disappointing you, and you have not once asked me why I did it."

She stopped his words with kisses. And with her arm around his neck, and her cheek laid against his, she whispered:

"As if I hadn't faith in you. As if I didn't love you and trust you."

"Oh, you dove! I would not give you for Anna Lyon and all the fine ladies that live, or ever did, or ever will live!" he said, warmly embracing her.

"I hope," she whispered, softly, "that you would never wish to give me up for any one; not that I am better than others; not that I am so good as they; but because I am your own, and you love me. But what made you think of Miss Lyon just then, dearest?"

"Oh, because, you know, it was planned between our parents, that Anna and I should marry, whether we liked to do it or not; fortunately, neither of us liked to do it."

"'Fortunately;' oh yes, how very fortunately! I cannot bear to think what I should have done, if you had married Miss Lyon," said Drusilla, with a shudder.

Alexander wished to divert the conversation from the dangerous topic to which he had so thoughtlessly led it, as he said:

"And you thought I had gone to the Italian Opera, this evening, did you, my little love?"

"Yes, I thought you had dined with some friend, and then had gone with him to see Lucia di' Lammermoor. Had you not?"

"No, my darling, no; I wouldn't have left you alone all the evening, for the sake of hearing the grandest opera ever written and played."

"Wouldn't you, Alick? But you might have done so. I shouldn't have thought hard of it. I couldn't expect you to be tied down to me all the time."

"But, my darling, I wouldn't have broken faith with you and stayed away, when I promised to be home, for any amusement under the sun. And nothing but the most urgent necessity should have kept me away on this occasion."

"Dear Alick, nothing disagreeable to you, I hope?"

"Only disagreeable, love, in so far as it detained me from your side."

"Then I am glad."

"It was only—some unexpected business connected with my late father's will," said Alexander, hesitatingly, and again speaking a literal truth to give a false impression. For certainly his embarrassments with Anna Lyon did grow out of his father's will—will that he, Alexander, should marry her.

But Drusilla understood him as speaking in a financial sense only—as he intended that she should; and she brightened up and answered:

"Ah, well, Alick, dear, since it was not very vexatious business, never mind if it *did* keep you away from me a few hours longer than you or I expected. I cannot hope to have you always here beside me; but you are here now and all is made up to you, is it not?"

"Yes, dear heart of my heart, all is made up to me now," said Alexander, folding her fondly to his heart.

And the night that he had dreaded so much closed in this perfect peace.

CHAPTER XIX.

A NEGLECTED WIFE.

He saw proud Clara's face more fair,
He knew her of broad lands the heir,
Forgot his vows, his faith forswore,
And Constance was beloved no more.—SCOTT.

THE day and night described in the last chapter were the types of many, too many days and nights that followed them. Alexander Lyon had placed himself in a false position and had a very difficult part to play between his wife and his betrothed.

On the morning after that little supper the young couple slept late; because on the previous evening they had found their bright fireside so delightful that they had remained there billing and cooing like a pair of lovers, as they still were, until the small hours, when at length they went to rest.

She was the first of the two to rise in the morning; for she was an ardent little housewife, and she liked to have everything about her small home in perfect order.

He slept on until noon, and then awoke with a weight upon his mind, though a very vague idea of what it meant. But presently, as his brain grew clearer, he remembered all the perplexing events of the preceding day and cursed his fate for bringing him into such an embarrassing position.

As he made his morning toilet he reflected that his uncle, an "early bird," like most old country gentlemen, had probably some hours before this called at his room at the Blank House and found him absent, and perhaps had been told by the servants there, that he had not been in all night.

What could the old gentleman think of such irregularity on the part of his nephew and intended son-in-law?

Alexander scarcely dared to answer that question. But full of anxious and perplexing thoughts, he finished his toilet and went below stairs.

In the breakfast room he found a fine fire, a neat table, and his lovely young wife in her pretty morning dress of white merino with black trimmings.

She put aside the book she had been reading and arose to receive him. He kissed her in silence and then dropped heavily into his chair.

She rang the bell and ordered breakfast served.

"I hope you have not waited for me, dear?" he languidly remarked.

"No; I had a cup of tea and a bit of dry toast when I first came down; but that was nine o'clock, and it is after one now; so I am quite ready to take breakfast with you. It will be my lunch."

Fragrant Mocha coffee, fresh eggs, smoked salmon, broiled chicken and light muffins were soon placed upon the table; and the two sat down to breakfast.

But tempting as the viands were that stood before him, Alexander could eat but little.

Drusilla noticed his want of appetite and said:

"You are not well, dear. Have you a headache? Shall I order some strong green tea made for you?"

"No, Drusa; I never drink tea in the morning unless I am really sick. And I am quite well now; except that I am a little disturbed in regard to—to that business connected with my late father's will, said Alexander, evasivly.

"Oh, then it wasn't settled yesterday?"

"Oh, no; and I fear it will not be for many days yet."

"I am sorry, Alick. But never mind. Everybody must have some little thing to vex them; but it can't last forever, you know. Try a little bit of this smoked salmon It is very nice."

To please her he tried the salmon, and found that it gave him an appetite; and he made a better breakfast than he had expected to do.

When he had finished, he rang the bell, which summoned Leo to the room.

"Have my horse saddled and brought around here directly," he said to the boy."

Then, turning to his wife, he added:

"I shall have to ride into town to-day to look after that business; but I will try to be back before night. I hope you won't be very lonesome, dear?"

An involuntary expression of surprise and disappointment clouded her face for an instant; but she chased the clouds away, and smilingly replied:

"Oh, no, I shall be very busy. But if you will tell me at what hour you will be back, I will have dinner ready for you."

"Have dinner at the usual hour, my dear. I will be back in time for it if I possibly can. But do not wait for me beyond five o'clock, do you hear?"

"Yes, Alick," she answered and again she had to chase away a rising cloud of disappointment by a sunny smile.

He went out to prepare for his ride, and as soon as he was ready he kissed his young wife and begged her not to mope; and then he mounted his horse, that stood saddled at the door, and rode briskly away.

She looked after him until he was out of sight, and then with a sigh turned into the house.

Meanwhile Alexander rode rapidly into the city, and, after leaving his horse at the livery stable, hurried anxiously off to the hotel where his uncle and cousin were stopping, and sent up his card.

They were both in, and he was soon ushered up into their private sitting-room.

General Lyon, reclining in his resting-chair, was reading the morning papers; and Miss Lyon, lolling on the sofa, was turning over the leaves of the libretto of the opera of the evening.

Alexander felt a little guilty as he walked into their presence.

But he was instantly consoled and reassured by the manners of both old gentleman and young lady.

"Oh, is that you, Alick? Good morning. Sit down. Excuse me for not rising. This is a shocking version of Il Trovatore," said Anna, without moving, or lifting her eyes from the pages she was studying.

"Ah! how do you do? Glad to see you. Intended to walk around your way this morning and see how you were getting on. But really, in such sharp weather as this, it seems to require an effort to leave the chimney-corner. Hope you'll excuse my not calling."

"With all my heart, sir," said Alexander, feeling immensely relieved, and blessing his stars that his uncle had

not called on him and discovered his absence after all.

"With all my heart, sir! I could not indeed expect, and would not wish you to take the trouble. It is rather my duty always to wait upon you—a duty that I shall always be most happy to perform."

"You're a good lad, Alick, a good lad," said the old soldier, frankly holding out his hand to his nephew.

"I hope I shall always be so happy as to deserve your good opinion, sir," said Alexander, taking the offered hand and bowing deeply over it.

But as he lifted himself up again he encountered the laughing eyes of Anna, who was regarding him with a mocking smile.

"Now, really, Alick, you know you are growing so Joseph Surfacish, that I am beginning to doubt your sincerity, she said.

Alexander's countenance fell. But the old gentleman came to the rescue.

"Never mind her, Alick. Who ever does mind Anna? But listen to me. I have made an engagement for you this evening."

Alexander started, with an unpleasant sensation about his heart; but the General, without noticing him, went on:

"There have been several parties calling here this morning, to invite Anna to go and hear this celebrated Italian Opera Troupe. But I excused her to one and all, telling them she was engaged to go with you, and also giving them to understand that she was also engaged for life to you, so that they might not waste any attentions upon her. And I sent and took a private box for you both, for this evening. Come! no thanks. I don't desire any. It was perfectly convenient for me to make these arrangements, to save you the trouble."

Alexander was dumfounded; he could not have returned thanks if he had tried. He dropped into the nearest seat, and wiped his face with his handkerchief, while the old gentleman went on to describe the attractions of the Italian Opera, and while Anna silently, with an amused expression of countenance, watched both.

"I—I fear, sir, that I cannot have the honor intended for me. I—"

—"Cannot have the honor intended for you? What the mischief do you mean by that, sir?" demanded the old gentleman, in surprise and displeasure.

"A previous engagement, I regret to say, sir, stands in the way."

"What sort of an engagement, boy? What sort of an engagement?"

"I had promised to dine with a friend—" began Alexander, speaking truly as to the letter, and falsely as to the spirit. But the old gentleman stopped him.

"Oh, a friend! a gentleman, of course, for it isn't possible that you should have promised to dine with any lady. Bosh, boy! Send the man an excuse; tell him here is a lady in the case; and take an early dinner with us, and be ready to attend Anna."

"Really, my dear grandfather, I wish you would not press this matter upon Mr. Lyon. You know that Dick is most anxious to be my escort," said Miss Lyon, in very justifiable displeasure.

Mr. Lyon and Dick. She called Alexander "Mr. Lyon," and Richard Hammond "Dick." Alexander noticed the distinction, and his blood fired; but before he could say a word, the old gentleman, with a flushed brow, struck in:

"Dick? What the deuce do you mean, Anna? Do you suppose I am going to allow you to be gallanted about by Dick or any other man, for that matter to set people gossiping? You an engaged young lady! And you, sir!" he exclaimed, turning angrily to Alexander—"Thunder and lightning! what do *you* mean, sir, by your excuses and your hesitations? Do you mean to slight your betrothed, sir?"

"Heaven forbid!" answered Alexander, earnestly. "I told you the reason why I hesitated—that I had an engagement to dinner, but that engagement—every lighter engagement—shall give way to your will, sir, and my dear cousin's service."

And so saying he bowed to his uncle, and would have lifted his cousin's hand to his lips, but that she drew it away with a mocking smile as she said:

"Thanks, Mr. 'Joseph Surface.' As I am resolved to see the opera, and as I cannot do so without your escort, I

suppose I must accept it. Though I tell you plainly that I would much rather have Dick's company."

"Anna!" exclaimed the General, again breaking in before Alexander could reply: "Anna, this is unbearable to tell your betrothed husband that you would rather have another man's company than his!—But Alick, my boy, I must say that you brought it all on yourself by your tardiness and seeming indifference.

"I am very sorry if I have seemed to be indifferent, when in fact I was very far from *really* being so. I hope my dear cousin will forgive me," bowed Alexander.

"Oh, of course she will. She spoke only from petulance —nothing else," smiled the old gentleman.

But Anna said nothing.

At this most unpropitious moment Mr. Richard Hammond was announced and entered the room.

CHAPTER XX.

RIVALRY.

> And he was jealous, tho' he would not show it,
> For jealousy dislikes the world to know it.—BYRON.

For an instant the rivals glared at each other; and then remembering in whose presence they stood, they lowered their eyes.

Richard Hammond shook hands with his uncle and his Cousin Anna and then turned towards Alexander, and the kindness of his heart overcoming all his jealousy for the moment, he frankly held out his hand, saying:

"How do you do, Alick? I hope you are well!"

"Thanks, quite so," returned Lyon, stiffly.

The General, a frank-hearted old soldier, did not like the reception that Alick had given Dick. He thought the successful rival, the accepted lover, the promised husband, might well afford to be more generous, and so to make up to Richard for the coldness of Alexander, he turned to the former and clapping him on the shoulder, exclaimed:

"Come, my boy! what are you standing there for? Sit down! sit down! and make yourself at home. Stay and dine with us. We shall be quite a family party!"

Dick laughed, thanked his uncle and took the offered seat.

And really soon his presence seemed to be a godsend to the constrained party. His gay, good-humored manner and conversation soon raised the spirits and warmed the hearts of all the little group. Even Alexander had the grace to come out of his sulks, and to say:

"I must congratulate you, Dick, upon your accession to a large fortune."

"Thank you, Alick. It came in good time, I tell you that. But Lord, Alick, maybe after all this fortune is only so much more steam clapped on the engine with which the demon is driving me on the road to ruin!" said Dick, with his usual outspoken truthfulness.

"I hope not; I hope not," said Alick.

"And I *believe* not," put in the General. "I am very glad to know that my nephew Dick has given up all his wild companions, who having spent one fortune for him, would be very glad to spend another"

"Ran away from them, uncle, ran away from them. I hadn't courage to give them up, so I gave them 'leg bail' and left them all behind in Richmond."

"Right, my boy! right! whatever may be said of the heroism of braving bodily perils, it is much wiser to run away from moral danger than to face it."

"Dick cannot bear to give any one pain. And if he had stayed among his old associates in Richmond, he would have let them ruin him again, rather than he would have hurt their feelings by cutting their acquaintance," explained Anna.

"Exactly. Therefore I say it was wiser to run away, as it will also be wisest to stay away," said the General. "But here comes the waiter to lay the cloth for dinner."

They all dined together; and afterwards, as there seemed scarcely any way of eluding the engagement, Alick took Anna to the opera.

It seemed really discourteous, as Alexander had a whole private box to himself and Anna, that he would not invite Dick to take a seat in it; but in fact he could not bring himself to do such violence to his own feelings of rivalry.

Dick went to the opera, however; and he occupied an

orchestra chair in a much better position for seeing and hearing than was Alexander's and Anna's private box.

And when the curtain fell upon the first act, he came around to the box, without seeming to think that he was intruding, and gaily and good-humoredly talked and laughed with his cousins, until the curtain rose upon the second act. And in the intervals of all the succeeding acts he came round to their box. Though there were two vacant seats, Alexander never once invited him to take one of them. Anna always did, however, and pressed him cordially to sit down. But Dick always gaily declined, and merely leaning over the back of one of the unoccupied chairs, talked and laughed until the rising of the curtain warned him to make his bow and retreat.

The performance was a very long one, so that it was some time after twelve o'clock when Alexander took Anna back to the hotel and gave her up to the charge of her grandfather.

And it was after two o'clock, when, half frozen and half famished, worn out in body and harassed in mind, he reached his home.

As on the evening previous the lights from the little drawing-room windows, gleaming through the wintry woods, cheered him on his approach and warned him that his loving wife was still up and waiting to welcome him home.

And there he found a bright fire, a warm supper and a happy face to comfort him. As before she forbore to reproach or to question him, and she received his voluntary explanation without hesitation and without doubt; —but this explanation, while true to the letter as far as it went was false in the spirit—giving her the impression that still "the troublesome business connected with his father's will" detained him in town.

Much of his conversation now, while being true to the letter, was false in the spirit. But how could this possibly be expected to last?

Day after day Alexander rode in to town. Night after night he came back, never earlier than one o'clock, sometimes as late as three or four; for on these occasions he would have to escort his cousin to a ball where the festivi-

ties were kept up until near daylight. And though Anna being in half-mourning refrained from dancing, she seldom retired from the scene until one or two o'clock.

For many days and nights Drusilla bore this state of things with exceeding patience and cheerfulness; always accepting his excuses for leaving her in the morning, and always having the lighted windows, the warm drawing-room, the bright fire and the hot supper to welcome him at night. But ah! worship him as she would, she was but a soul encased in flesh and blood, and her health and spirits from loneliness and late hours, long continued, began to suffer. There was another cause, too, for the poor child's failing strength, which had her husband known it, should have appealed strongly to his tenderness. But to do him justice in this particular, he did not know it any more than his wife did. She became nervous and irritable, and she wondered what could ail her, to make her so unlike her old self. She tried very hard first to overcome her nervous irritability, then to keep it from annoying him.

After he would leave her each day she would begin to occupy herself diligently, so that her spirits might not droop. She inspected every portion of her house from roof to cellar, and kept all in perfect order. She did a great deal of needle-work, she read many books, she painted some pictures, and she perfected herself in some of the most difficult pieces of music. So at first she managed to get through her lonely days.

When the day's work was done, and the sky grew dark, and she knew that a long, lonely night was before her, she would have a bright fire lighted in the drawing-room and an exquisite little supper planned out for her husband.

And then, when bedtime came, in her kindness of heart she would send her servants to rest, and she would sit alone by the fire, reading and watching until his return. Sometimes, in the loneliness of the place, and of the hour, the stillness would grow almost awful to her, and she would feel that she must speak to some human creature, or go mad, and she would be tempted to go and call Pina up to sit with her. But there again her compassion came in and saved her servant from being disturbed. And so, rather than inconvenience another, she would sit on

alone "through the dead waste and middle of the night," until she became so nervous as to dread to hear the sound of her own low breathing, or to see the reflection of her own scared face in the glass.

But then how welcome the sound of his horse's feet, which her listening ears could hear in the deep silence even when he was riding along the open road before he turned into the wood.

Then in a moment all was changed. The flush of joy chased the paleness from her cheeks; the light of love beamed from her eye; and she was ready to welcome him with her happy face.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SORROWS OF THE YOUNG WIFE.

Yet for all this, let him stand
In my thoughts, untouched by blame,
Could he help it, if my hand
He had claimed, with hasty claim?
That was wrong, perhaps, but then
Such things be, and will again.
Women cannot judge for men.—E. B. BROWNING.

ONE morning near the last of February, when the young wife arose, leaving her husband still in bed heavily sleeping off his fatigue, she found that it was snowing fast, the flakes coming down fine and thick as sifted flour, and promising a deep and heavy fall. And she was glad to see it, for she said to herself:

"Surely Alick cannot leave home on such a tempestuous day as this."

And if it had been possible for her fireside and breakfast table to have been brighter and more attractive than they always were, she would have made them so this morning for his sake. And the hope, the almost certainty of having him home all day long made her face radiant with joy and beauty.

Presently he came down heavily enough.

"What beastly weather!" he said, looking through the window at the thickly falling snow.

Her face fell a little, she scarcely knew why. But she touched the bell and ordered the breakfast served.

"And tell Leo to have my horse at the door in half an hour," added Alick.

"You are not going out on such a day as this, dear Alick," she said.

"Yes, I am. It is that horrid business. Now, Drusilla, my little woman, do try to be cheerful and don't vex me by looking that way," he said, as he saw her grave face.

"I am only sorry, dear, that you have to leave home in such weather, that is all," she answered, as she turned and busied herself with pouring out the coffee that was just then set upon the table.

And he ate his breakfast in haste, dressed in haste and then mounted his horse and hurried off to town.

The snow continued to fall and the day passed very heavily with the poor young wife. Still her thought was for her husband.

"Oh, what a night he will have to come home in," she said to herself again and again, as she saw that the weather grew worse and worse as the day waned later and later.

At length towards evening she could keep her anxiety to herself no longer, and she said to her maid:

"Oh, Pina, what a night for Mr. Lyon to ride home in!"

"Indeed, ma'am, I don't think he will come at all."

"Not come home at all!" echoed Pina's mistress, aghast.

"Why you see, ma'am, it will be dangerous. Only look out. The fences are nearly all covered and the snow is still falling," said the girl, pointing through the windows of the kitchen where this conversation took place.

"I see," sighed the lonely wife, and her heart seemed to sink like lead in her bosom. But then she took herself to task and said:

"Why should I feel so miserable because my husband must stay away from me for one night? I would much rather that he should stay all night in Washington than risk his life in attempting to return home in the darkness,

through such a snow-storm as this, in which all landmarks seem to be lost."

And so she tried to reason with her longing heart.

At night, however, it stopped snowing. But the wind came up from the northwest and blew very hard, and the new fallen snow began to freeze as firm as adamant.

"What do you think now, Pina? Do you think your master can get home?" inquired the master's wife of her maid.

"Lor, ma'am, why this is worse than the other."

"What is, Pina?"

"This freeze is worse than the falling snow, ma'am, because it will make the roads all as slippery as glass; so, even if his horse is rough shod, master will hardly be able to get home."

"Well, Pina, I trust that he will run no risk. But, in case he should come, we must have everything ready for him as usual. The worse the weather, the more comfort he will want. So you must dress the wild duck for the roaster, and I will make a little cabinet pudding," said Pina's mistress, tying on an apron and tucking up her sleeves.

"We may prepare for him, ma'am, but he will never return such a night as this, you may take my word for that. It would be as much as his life and limbs are worth to attempt it," answered the girl.

These words made the young wife very uneasy. Much as she wished for his presence, she now prayed that he might not set out to return. And it was with some comfort she reflected that Alexander never unnecessarily ran any risk; that he would certainly be able to judge of the dangers of the roads, and would as certainly avoid them. Still, in the event of his returning that night, she was determined to have everything ready for him.

As night deepened, it grew colder and colder. Outside it was like the polar regions. There

> "Dread winter spread his latest glooms
> And reigned tremendous—"

—all darkness, snow and ice.

Inside, all was light, warmth and comfort.

In the drawing-room a large bright fire was burning; the little table was laid for supper; the easy-chair and the warm slippers were ready.

At ten o'clock, Drusilla, as usual, would have dismissed her maid to bed, but the girl pleaded to remain up "for this once" with her mistress.

"If you please, ma'am, master will not be home to-night, I'm certain sure of it. But you'll sit up all the same. So please let me sit up with you till you gives it up."

"As you like, Pina," replied the young mistress.

And the little lady settled herself in one of the easy-chairs before the fire, and the maid nestled down among the foot cushions in the corner.

In less than an hour, Pina, overcome with the heat of the fire and the heaviness of her own head, fell fast asleep.

And Drusilla watched on, almost as much alone as if her maid had been a hundred miles away—as very likely she was, in the spirit.

Drusilla was hoping against hope, that her too much loved husband might return home and in safety; but she could not justify this hope to her reason, for certainly this was a night in which no man in his senses, who valued his life and limbs, would take the road; and just as certainly, Alexander had a wholesome regard for his own; so it was not likely that he would risk them.

Still Drusilla waited and watched until the clock struck twelve. Then, as her maid was snoring sonorously, to say nothing of baking her head by getting it almost into the fire, Drusilla woke her up and ordered her off to bed.

Pina, too utterly wearied with watching, and too stupid with sleep to make any resistance, stumbled off to her attic, finding her way as a somnambulist might.

And Drusilla was left quite alone. The clock struck two. And still she watched on and on. She thought there was little use in doing so, but she could not help it. She continued, at intervals, to stare through the windows, and to listen to every sound without, though she saw nothing but the darkness of the night, and the glimmer of the snow-clad spectral looking trees, and heard nothing

but the howling of the wind and the rattling of the icicles.

But suddenly, through all deeper sounds, she heard the merry ringing of sleigh-bells!

And she started to her feet, for she knew in an instant, that her husband had come home in a sleigh—a possibility that had never occurred either to herself or her servant.

She ran to the door and pulled it open. But Alexander had turned around to the stable, and so it was some ten minutes before he returned to the door.

It flew open at his knock, and Drusilla threw herself in his arms; she could not help this, she was so overjoyed at his almost unhoped for return in safety that night.

"Up still, my faithful little darling?" he said, kissing her.

"Yes; and I hope you are very hungry this time, as well as very cold, dear Alick, for I have such a supper for you!"

"Yes? Well you may swear that I am famished, for I have not broken my fast since luncheon," he laughed.

She helped him to draw off his overcoat, and hung it up in the hall; and then she pulled him with affectionate solicitude and playful force out from the cold hall into the snug little drawing-room, and made him comfortable.

"Dear Alick, your hands are almost frozen! You must have had a real Laplander's ride, and without the Laplander's furs. How came you to undertake it, dear?" she asked, as she pushed him down in his arm-chair, and sat on a cushion at his side, and took his icy hands between her own warm ones, and rubbed them. "Why did you come, Alick, dear?"

"My darling, it is bad enough for me to stay away from you as much as I do—as much as I am *compelled* to do on account of that vexatious business; but really it would be too bad to stay away all night, and I never mean to do that," he answered.

"Oh, Alick dear, how glad I am to hear you say so. And I am so glad you came to-night, since you have reached home in safety. The servants thought that you would not come, that it would be too dangerous a journey to undertake on horseback."

"So it would, my dear, and that is the reason why I

bought the sleigh; which, besides, I thought would be useful this winter."

"Oh, yes, indeed, so it will. And we are both so fond of sleighing. We shall have some fine sleighing together," she said.

He made no reply to the observation, for he knew full-well that he should have no time to realize her anticipations.

"Don't you remember, Alick, the fine sleigh rides we used to have in the Christmas holidays, when you used to come home to spend them; and when you used to take Miss Anna out, and always insist that your 'child,' as you called me, should go along, too? Do you remember, Alick?"

"Yes, little Drusa, quite well," he answered gravely, and with some emotion, as he tenderly smoothed her hair with his hand.

"Oh, can I ever forget all your kindness to me from that time to the very present? Can I ever do too much —can I ever do enough for you?"

"Poor little Drusa!" he murmured.

"But there, your hands are warm now, and I will set the supper on the table," said the busy little housewife.

When Alick was warmed and fed, and comforted and satisfied, he turned from the table and the fire towards his little wife, and said:

"Well, Drusa, as I had the sleigh I thought I might as well bring something home in it besides myself. So I walked into several of the book stores and picked up the best of the new books that are published."

"New books! Oh, thank you, dear Alick; where are they?" eagerly exclaimed Drusilla, rising from her chair to look for them; for she who had so few amusements—so few?—I should have said no amusements at all,—was delighted at the mention of new books. "Where are they, Alick dear?" she repeated, glancing around the room.

"Sit down, my pet. Do you think I could have brought them in my hand, or in my pocket? Why, they are an armful for a railway porter. I left them in the sleigh in the stable. You shall have a glorious time over them to-morrow; it is too late to look at them to-night

even if we had them lying before us; for, do you see what o'clock it is?"

Drusilla glanced up at the Ormolu timepiece on the mantel shelf, and saw, with surprise, that it was nearly two o'clock in the morning.

And Alexander arose at the same moment to put up the guard and close the shutters, saying, with a smile,

"We have to be our own servants when we are so unreasonable as to sit up so late, love." And soon after both retired.

The next day was intensely cold, but clear and brilliant; the ground was covered deep with hard frozen snow, and the trees were clothed with frost and ice, and the sun shone out of a bright blue sky, lighting up all the scene with blinding radiance.

Immediately after breakfast, Mr. Lyon had the sleigh brought around to the door. The packages, left in it from the night before, were ordered to be taken out and brought into the drawing-room.

"Here, little one! here are some dozens of new books that will help you to kill the time between this and my return," said Alexander, directing her attention to the packages.

"Oh, thank you, Alick. But must you go to town again to-day?"

"Of course I must; I must go every day for some time yet."

Drusilla suppressed the sigh that arose to her lips, but she could not forbear the question:

"And stay late, Alick?"

"That is as it may be, Drusa. I shall return as soon as I can get away. Now amuse yourself with your books, and don't mope."

"Oh, no, I won't mope," said Drusilla. "You are so good to me, Alick, I ought not to do so."

He jumped into his sleigh, and sped away to the ringing of the bells. And she watched him out of sight, and then turned into the drawing-room and sat down among her new books, and began to unwrap them. Most of my readers know the delight of opening and examining a package of new books. Drusilla was absorbed in the pleasure of opening package after package, and examining

volume after volume, until at length she selected the book that she wished to read first, and laid it aside, and then she took the others into the library and put them in proper places.

She had scarcely completed this pleasant piece of work, before she heard her maid calling to her ·

" Oh, ma'am, ma'am, come here, please, and see the snow-birds."

She who loved all living creatures, went into the kitchen and looked from the windows, and saw hopping about upon the frozen snow several hundred of these little creatures.

Drusilla, who had always spent her summers in the country, but her winters in town, had never seen, or, if she had seen, had never particularly noticed, these birds before.

" My ! what a sight ! What brings so many of them here, Pina ? " she inquired, in astonishment.

" Why, you see, ma'am, the ground and the bushes and the trees are all covered with frost and snow and ice, and they can't find anything to eat in the woods or fields or lanes, and so they look for food about houses."

" Poor little things ! What do they eat, Pina ? "

" Anything eatable, ma'am, that is small enough for them to swallow ;—grains of rice, crumbs of bread, specks of meat——"

" Oh, throw out whole handfuls of rice for them," said Drusilla.

" That would hardly do, ma'am. It would sink in the snow and be lost before the birds could get it. But if you will let me sprinkle food on all the window-sills around the house, you will see the little creatures come in scores to eat. And it will amuse you, like, ma'am, to sit and see the art of the little rogues, how one will watch from a bush to see the coast clear, and then notify the others to come and eat."

" Oh, then," said Drusilla, with all the eagerness of a child, " crumble up several loaves of bread, and sprinkle every window-sill of the house full as it will hold."

" Would you like some traps set in the woods, ma'am ? "

" Traps, what for ? "

" To catch the birds, ma'am."

" To catch the birds ? "

" Yes, ma'am. They make excellent pies, and——"

"Oh, hush—no!"

"The boys will catch them, ma'am, if you don't. They set traps in the woods. And they puts food under them. And the little birds go to get it, and are caught and killed."

"How cruel and treacherous! Poor little things, to be frozen out, and starved out, and to come to us for food and shelter, and to be killed and eaten. The boys shan't trap them on our place, any way. So if you or Leo find a trap in our woods break it up, and if you find a trapper whip him!" said the little champion of birds, as she left the kitchen.

That day passed with Drusilla less drearily than usual. When all her household duties had been discharged, she sat in her snug little drawing-room, feasting upon her new books, furtively watching the snow-birds that were feasting upon the crumbs on the window-sill, and which as furtively watched her, and flew away the instant they caught her eyes, only to fly back the instant they saw them fall upon her book again; for these little raiders did not yet know their benefactress.

So quiet was this place that the wild creatures of the woods feared not to approach it; and Drusilla, looking from her window, could see the squirrel seated on a twig and nibbling his nut, or the opossum curled up in his hole, or the fleet little hare race across the frozen snow, the raccoon peeping from the hollow of his tree. It was well that this child of nature loved nature with all her children so well, for not a human being could Drusilla see from her window.

Her beautiful wild-wood home—beautiful even in the dead of winter—was separated on all sides by many acres of thick woods from any public thoroughfare. The road leading through the woods was a strictly private one leading to her house, and nowhere else.

Drusilla sat alternately reading and watching her favorites, until two o'clock in the afternoon, when Pina brought in her mistress's simple dinner of boiled chicken and custard pudding.

It was a solitary dinner; for things had come to such a pass now that the little wife, instead of taking a luncheon in the middle of the day, and waiting dinner for the

husband who never, never came to eat it, always now dined alone soon after noon.

And now Drusilla consoled herself for the absence of her husband by thinking of the supper she would prepare for him and share with him in the evening.

"Pina," she said, as she saw the snow-birds fly away from the window-sill at her slightest motion; "Pina, will I never be able to tame these little creatures by kindness?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am; you may make them so tame that they will come and eat out of your hand."

"How—how can I do that?"

"By just doing as you do now, ma'am. They will soon find out as you mean them no harm but good, and they will cease to fear you and begin to love you," answered the girl, as she removed the dinner service.

And Drusilla spent the afternoon as she had spent the morning.

That night Alexander, for a wonder, came home as early as eight o'clock. And the cheerful day was succeeded by a happy evening.

CHAPTER XXII.

DIFFICULTIES OF DECEPTION.

Ah, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we venture to deceive.—SCOTT.

ALEXANDER had his troubles too, and they were not the less trying because he had brought them on himself by his own wrong-doing—rather the more so, in fact, since remorse was added to regret, and the loss of self-respect to the loss of domestic peace.

He was learning by personal experience that "the way of the transgressor is hard."

He found it very difficult to play two parts and live in two places at the same time.

This was the way his day passed. He usually arose at ten o'clock in the morning, with a bad headache and a worse heartache, made a quick toilet and a poor break-

fast, then threw himself into the saddle and rode away as fast as his horse's feet could carry him.

He always contrived to be at his rooms in his hotel by eleven o'clock in the forenoon, lest his uncle should call for him and find him out. And always on entering his chamber he would tumble his bed and slop his washstand to deceive the servants of the hotel into the idea that he had slept there; for he was in constant dread lest his uncle should discover that he passed the night elsewhere.

To carry on the deception, every day he breakfasted at the hotel table, and he dined with his uncle and cousin. And every evening he accompanied Anna to some place of amusement, where she was always the most admired beauty in the room, and where he was the most envied man, because it was generally understood that he was her betrothed husband.

He seldom returned home before one o'clock, and sometimes not before three in the morning.

You perceive by this how little time he had to bestow on his young wife.

Meanwhile Drusilla was more lonely than words can tell.

Just think of it.

It was the depth of winter.

She lived in a lone house in a thick wood. She had no companion in the house, no acquaintance in the neighborhood, and no correspondent in the world. She never made a visit, or had a visitor, or wrote a letter, or received one. Her one object in life was her husband; her one interest in the day his return at night; and if he had given her a little more of his company, if only an evening now and then, she could have been happy;—or if, when he did come home, he could have been more cheerful in her presence, she would have been less miserable.

But, ah! friends, Alexander—as is always the case with an evil-door—went on from bad to worse.

And when morning after morning he gulped down his coffee in hot haste, and hurried away from his home, in eager anxiety; and when night after night he returned in the small hours, too cold, tired and harassed to notice the preparations she had made for his comfort, or to share the supper she had kept waiting for him, or even to be-

stow a kiss or a smile, or a look upon her; when, in fact, he seemed to have become estranged from her; then, indeed, her heart failed, her beauty faded, and she hung her head like a flower drooping in the cold.

She tried very hard to keep up her spirits and preserve her beauty for his sake and for her own. For more than all earthly things she wished to retain his love. And she remembered how in her childhood, he had scolded her for crying, telling her that it made her ugly, and that he could not possibly love an ugly little girl; and how she had almost suffocated herself then, in her efforts to suppress her sobs, lest she should grow ugly and lose his love.

Then he had been a mere thoughtless youth, teasing a timid child who loved him; now he was or seemed a heartless man, torturing a sensitive young woman, who had given her whole life into his hands.

Yet these were not her thoughts of him; she did not blame him even to herself; she was more ingenious in finding excuses for his conduct, than even he would have been. But she was right in trying to be always bright and beautiful, so as to retain his love, since she valued it so highly—for he *did* dislike ugly and sorrowful faces.

And at length, when her powers of self-control were exhausted—when loneliness, late hours, fatigue of body and distress of mind had done their work upon her heart and frame, and broken down her health and spirits—her pale face, heavy eyes, languid motions and faltering tones irritated him, for they were so many severe, though silent and involuntary reproaches to him.

"As if it were not enough," he sometimes said to himself, "that for her sake, I have foolishly given up the most beautiful woman of the day, and sacrificed the most brilliant prospects of my life, and worse than all, placed myself in a false and degrading position, but that now, she must make me more miserable still, with her moping manners."

But here his faithful conscience always rebuked him for his injustice, and awakened his memory to remind him, that his poor young wife herself, child as she was, had at the time of his proposal for her hand, set all these possible regrets before him, and had warned him to pause and reflect, before taking the irrevocable step of making her his

wife; and that he himself had been strong to overcome her hesitation and stubborn to maintain his own will.

And then in a fit of remorse, he would break out upon himself with:

"I am certainly the most infernal villain that Heaven ever let live!" or words to the same effect.

In these moods he would go and buy something to take home to Drusilla, some set of jewels, piece of lace, rich shawl, gay dress, or other article of vanity.

But soon he saw that his child-bride, who was still wearing her first mourning for her dead mother, valued these things not in themselves, but only as proofs of his thought for her.

And besides, how could jewels and fine clothes console the loving young wife for the lost society of her husband?

But Alexander was provoked, that his efforts to please her were so utterly unavailing. He did not reflect that if she had been a vain, selfish woman, and had loved herself more than she loved him, she would have been happy in his *presents*, and indifferent to his *presence*.

But as she was neither vain, nor selfish, as she loved him rather than herself, she pined amidst all her plenty, because he was almost always absent from her.

This pining became evident in her appearance, notwithstanding all her efforts to conceal it.

And sometimes it exasperated him so much that it was with difficulty he could restrain himself from reproaching her, and thus adding to the sum of his own injustice and her misery.

Often, also, his temper was severely tried in town by what *he* called the difficulties of his position, but what any one else might have called the hardships of the transgressor.

One day especially, when he rode into the city a little later than usual, he found his uncle at his room waiting for him.

"Where the deuce is it, Alick, that you gallop off to every morning of your life?" inquired the old gentleman, who had somehow or other got a hint that his nephew rode *into* Washington every morning, but had no suspicion that he slept *out* of the city every night. "Where the deuce is it that you go?" he repeated.

Alick, taken by surprise, hesitated before he could summon the presence of his mind, and reply:

"Oh, I make a practice of taking a gallop through the morning air for my health."

"Umph, umph, umph!" growled the old gentleman. "You look more like you made a practice of sitting over your wine until four or five, or six o'clock in the morning for your illness."

Alick laughed rather lugubriously, it must be confessed, for he saw that the old gentleman's suspicions were aroused, although, of course, they must have been of the vaguest character.

"Well," said the General, "you have got a busy day before you, Alick, and no time to lose. First, you have to escort Anna to St. John's Church, to be present at the wedding of Señor Don Emillio Arayo, the son of the Brazilian Minister, with Mademoiselle Marie de Courcey, niece of the French Ambassador. All the world is going, and Anna is going with them, of course."

"Satan fly away with the Spanish puppy and the French ninny!" was Alick's secret thought. But he bowed, and said:

"Sir, I shall be most happy."

"And then you are engaged to dine at Major-General Scott's. And after that to go and take Anna to see the great new tragedienne, Mrs. Starrs, in Lady Macbeth; after which you sup with me and Anna."

"What a fussy old Polonius uncle is getting to be, to be sure! I really think the old man is falling into his dotage," thought Alick within himself. But he answered aloud:

"A very pleasant programme, sir."

"Aye, I suppose you young people think it so. I confess I don't. But, Alick, my boy, I must beg you to forego your gallop to-morrow morning. My old friend—and your late father's oldest friend—Commodore Storms, is coming to breakfast with me at eight o'clock, and, of course, you must join us. It will be the only chance you will have of seeing him, as he is only passing through the city on his way south, and leaves by the mid-day train to-morrow."

Alexander stared in dismay, and then inquired:

"Could I not see him to-day, sir?"

"No, he is gone with a party to visit Mount Vernon. Besides, what time have you to do anything to-day but what is appointed for you?"

"None indeed," said Alexander with an involuntary sigh, which did not escape the notice of the old man.

"Does it afflict you so much then?" inquired the General.

"What sir?"

"The idea of your giving up your mysterious morning ride for a breakfast with two old Revolutionary relics like the commodore and myself," answered the General, fixing a scrutinizing gaze upon his nephew's face.

"Oh no, sir! I—was thinking only how much rather I would see my father's old friend sooner than later," answered Alexander, again true in the letter but false in the spirit of his reply.

And so Mr. Lyon concluded that there was no alternative for him but to stay in town all night as well as all day. And he did so, fully carrying out the programme sketched for him by his uncle, but feeling all the while great pain from the thought that his poor lonely young wife would sit up the whole night waiting anxiously for his return.

The next day was quite as much taken up with engagements as any former day had been; and so it was long past midnight when Alick got home.

He found Drusilla wan and wasted with waiting and watching there two days and nights of suspense and anxiety; but he saw no look of reproach in her gentle eyes, heard no word of blame from her sweet lips.

He perceived her sufferings and was angry with himself for causing them, and he began some lame explanation of his absence.

But she saw his embarrassment and stopped his faltering words with a kiss, and she said:

"Dear Alick, it is enough that you are here again to make me happy. You do not need to render your poor little wife, who has not much wisdom of her own, an account of your actions."

And she told him the little news of the two days at

home, and she laughed and jested and served his supper with her old cheerfulness and alacrity.

The next morning Alexander went to town with the deliberate purpose of ending his own perplexities and his wife's sufferings, by doing the right thing and confessing his secret marriage to his uncle.

But ah! it always happened whenever an especial fit of repentance moved Alexander to amendment, something occurred to throw him back upon his evil course and confirm him in it.

So it was on this morning.

He strolled into a reading-room and sat down at one of the tables and took up a paper to look at the news of the day. He had not been there more than five minutes when he heard his cousin Anna's name mentioned in connection with his own. Impulsively he looked up and listened.

The speakers, seated at a table near, were strangers to him, as he evidently was to them, since they discussed his private affairs so freely in his hearing.

"I tell you there is not a word of truth in it. It is all a mistake. If is a false report. The beautiful Anna cares no more for young Lyon, than she does for you or me. If she cares for any one on earth, it is for that handsome fellow, Dick Hammond, who has just come into a great fortune," said the first speaker.

"That may all be quite true. I am not saying who she cares for, but who she is going to marry. She may not care a pin for Lyon, and she may adore Hammond; but for all that she must marry Lyon and give Hammond the go-by, since such was the will of the two ancient landed proprietors, her grandfather and grand-uncle, who long ago decided that their large estates should be united," said the second speaker.

"Well, if I were the lady's choice, Dick Hammond, I think I should set a very serious impediment between the union of those said estates.

"And if I were the betrothed lover, Alexander Lyon, I would break Dick's neck for his presumption," said the last speaker, as both arose from the table and strolled away.

Alexander's anger and jealousy were both aroused, and his good resolutions were put to flight. He arose and

followed the two speakers, but they had disappeared in the crowd.

The days of duelling are past, thank Heaven; else Alexander would have liked to have sought out and called out one or both of these male gossips and exchanged a shot with either or both of them at ten paces.

As it was he could only let his anger cool down and then acknowledge to himself that they had really neither done nor said anything very wrong. They had only unconsciously wounded his self-love and aroused his jealousy

Anna Lyon, his beautiful cousin, had always been intended for himself, he said, and Dick Hammond knew it. And even now, for all Dick Hammond knew to the contrary, he, Alick Lyon, had the exclusive right to Anna's regards.

How then did he, Dick Hammond, dare to set himself up as a lover of Anna, and a rival of her betrothed?

Yes! and how dared Anna, in the face of her parent's will and her own engagements, receive and favor him as such?

Alick ground his teeth with rage and jealousy.

"They must never know, they *shall* never know, but that my claims to Anna's hand are as good as they ever were!—At least they shall not know it until all possibility of Hammond's union with Anna is destroyed," said Alick to himself.

And that day he devoted himself with lover-like assiduity to his Cousin Anna. And that night he remained in town all night.

Alas, for Drusilla! She had fallen upon still darker days; for now she never even knew when waiting up for her husband, whether he would return or not.

Still—still she strove against despondency and hoping against hope, assumed some cheerfulness.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SILENT SORROW.

And the little lady grew silent and thin,
Paling and ever paling,
As is the case with a hid chagrin,
And they all said she was ailing.—ROBERT BROWNING.

THE young wife's faith and hope were sinking under the pressure of coldness and solitude; and only her undying love survived in all its strength and beauty.

She was seriously ill, though she still kept up, moving about the house to attend to her domestic affairs all day, and sitting up to receive her husband half the night.

And these exhausting duties of course made her worse.

And oh, illness in woman is very repulsive to most men, and especially to those of Alexander Lyon's fastidious nature and self-indulgent habits. Illness pales the cheeks and dims the eyes; and worse than all, it frets the nerves and tries the temper.

So it was with Drusilla: weary and anxious, suffering in mind and body, when Alexander came home near morning she could not always welcome him with the happy glances he had been accustomed to receive from her.

And on these occasions her sad face and tearful eyes so displeased and irritated him, that he would go off to his own room without touching the refreshments that she had got ready for him, or even stopping to bestow a kind word upon her,

He meant, by this conduct, to punish her for what, in his thoughts, he called "her sulks." But this sort of punishment nearly broke her loving heart. He caused her depression and then blamed her for being depressed. It was as if he had crushed a violet and then blamed it for withering.

It was a pity, too, that just at this time such a contrast should have been exhibited between his brilliant, beautiful, and imperious cousin and his little, pale, drooping wife.

He would spend the evening with Anna at some fash-

ionable assembly, where he saw her, in all the splendor of beauty and pride of place, the all-admired belle of the season, the reigning queen of society;—and then, full of the intoxication of her new charms, he would return home to find Drusilla, pale, weary and depressed, and he would start off to his own room to curse the fate that had so long blinded him to the transcendent attractions of his high-born cousin, and bound him for life to the insignificant daughter of his housekeeper. And the very bitterest element in his misery was the thought that, sooner or later, his old rival, Richard Hammond, must win the priceless treasure that he himself had so madly cast away

It is to be feared that if at this time Alexander Lyon could possibly have devised any means of secretly and legally repudiating his young wife, he would not have hesitated to do so. As it was, he estranged himself from her, and passed more nights in his rooms at the hotel than in his home at Cedarwood. But he never gave the gentle creature a single harsh word or look: with all his madness—and his mood was little less than madness —he could not do either; he simply broke her spirit by coldness, neglect and avoidance.

And yet, notwithstanding all this, if he had but known it, in his heart of hearts it was Drusilla he loved and not Anna.

He had made no mistake in marrying this sweet girl; it had been a true inspiration that had drawn him towards her when he was a youth and she a child. She was the better half of his spirit, and the guardian angel of his life, as well as the true love of his youth. And once he knew all this to be true; but now he seemed to have forgotten.

Besides, Drusilla—soul and body, beyond all doubt or question—was his own; and therefore was she undervalued and despised as something of little worth; while Anna was unattainable by him, and likely to become the wife of his rival; and therefore was Anna over-rated as a pearl beyond price, and desired with passionate eagerness. But whatever this phrenzy was, for the girl whom he had known from his boyhood up, and in his thoughts rejected as a wife years before—it was not love; it was probably a hallucination made up of pride, jealousy, admiration, and

the fascination of the unattainable. Alexander Lyon had fancied many a beauty in his life; but he had never once loved any other than the young, devoted wife whom he now so insanely wronged and grieved

And ah! how severely she suffered in secret, how bitterly she wept over the ever-increasing estrangement; never blaming him, however, even in her thoughts; blaming herself, rather, for not being able to merit his love and make him happy; never losing faith in him, but losing faith in herself.

Her love was without a taint of selfishness; but it was not without sin, for it was idolatrous.

She seemed to herself to have no life but in him. Failing, as she thought, to *merit* his love, and failing to make him happy, she was willing to die to set him free and give him peace.

"Poor Alick," she said, in her heart, as she paced up and down her forsaken chamber floor, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly; "Poor Alick, it is not his fault that we are both so miserable, it is mine. I am not a fit wife for him; I never was; but I loved him so! I loved him so. Ah, but if I had loved him rightly I never would have let him shipwreck his life upon me—so unfit to be his mate. He married me out of pity, and I let him do it, and now I deserve to be wretched. But he is wretched too, though he don't deserve to be so. Ah! what can I do to undo all this?"

And in the climax of her hysterical passion she was almost ready to lay down her young life that her beloved might step over it into liberty and light.

"Oh, why, oh, why did he ever ruin his hopes by wedding me? Why? Oh, I know too well why. Poor Alick! it was out of the goodness of his heart that he did it! He was always so good to me from my infancy up, calling me his child, giving me everything I needed, doing all I asked. And when he saw me a poor little motherless and homeless girl, he took pity on me, and raised me up and put me on his bosom and comforted me and tried to love me; but he cannot, because I am not lovable; and now, even now, he never gives me an unkind word or look, only stays away from me because he cannot love me, and he is too honest to feign a love he cannot feel. Oh, Alick!

I would die to make you free and happy again, if it were not a sin! I would, dear, I would!"

Such was the burden of her lamentations in her hours of secret suffering.

No word of these sad plaints reached his ears. Her paroxysms of anguish would have exhausted themselves, or she would have obtained some degree of self-command before his late return home; so that though pale and sad, and bearing the traces of recent tears, she met him with composure; for she remembered, poor child, his abhorrence of an ugly, weeping face.

But now he had no mercy on her; she seemed to him a fetter that galled him, and he pitied himself and not her.

Sometimes, when she looked even more than usually pale and ill, he wondered whether she was going to die; but he wondered without alarm, and even without pity.

Drusilla spent the long winter evenings in reading. She read a great number of books, but they were not always the most judiciously chosen, or the best calculated to cheer her spirits or strengthen her mind.

Among the new works that Alexander brought home one night and threw carelessly upon the table, was Mrs. Crowe's "Night side of Nature."

And this book subsequently fell into Drusilla's hands, and she seized and read it with avidity. And worse than all, she read it in her lonely night watches in that isolated country house.

The work, written with great power to prove the reality of the re-appearance of departed spirits in this world, and filled with accredited stories of apparitions, haunted houses, marvellous visions, presentiments, omens, warnings, dreams, et cetera, had a great fascination for Drusilla, and night after night she pored over its dark pages with a morbid fervor.

There was another book that came in her way about the same time, and exercised the same fatal spell over her impressible imagination. It was that volume of De Quincy's works containing the "Three Memorable Murders," and worked up with all the fearful intensity of the Opium Eater.

The effect of these books upon her excitable nervous system was terrible.

This was owing very much to the circumstances under which they were read. In a solitary house, in a deep wood, in the dead of night, and in the depth of winter. And often, her imagination would be so wrought upon, that she would not dare to lift her eyes to the looking-glass over the mantel-piece, lest she should meet there the reflection of some face other than her own, nor venture to glance at the windows on her left, for fear she should see some spectral form peering in through the darkness.

And so, in the appalling solitude and silence of the scene, and of the hour, imaginary terrors were added to real troubles, and between them both her nervous system was nearly broken down.

It is true that she might have ameliorated her condition in more than one way, but that she had too much consideration for others and too little for herself.

She might have gone to bed early each night but that Alexander had no night key, and there was no one to let him in whenever he pleased to return, except herself.

Also, she might have made Pina sit up to keep her company; but she would not deprive the girl of rest.

Lastly, she could at least have closed the window shutters against that imaginary spectral form she always feared to see; but she chose to leave them open that the light from her drawing-room might cheer her beloved in his late approach to the house—whenever he chose to come home; which was not often at this period.

But this state of things could not last forever; and a crisis was at hand.

One dark, still, winter night, when not a star was to be seen in the sky, and the very air, as well as the earth and the water seemed frozen—between two and three o'clock after midnight, Drusilla sat alone in her drawing-room.

To while away the tedious hours she had read until her eyes filmed and her brain reeled. And then she had been compelled to lay aside her book, and sink back in her resting-chair.

In the excited state of her nervous system she could not sleep, for she was listening through the dead stillness of deep night, hoping to hear the sound of the horse's feet, that was always the warning of her husband's approach.

And yet she had no means of knowing whether he would return that night or not.

As she sat there waiting and listening, she could but remember the possible dangers of her position.

The house contained much of the sort of property that tempt burglars—property at once very valuable and very portable—such as silver and gold plate, jewels and money.

She had been living in it now some months, and secludedly as she lived, her abode there, and the richness and defencelessness of the premises might well have come to the knowledge of the professional burglars, whose acuteness in discovering such rich mines of unprotected treasure is much finer than that of the detectives who are always supposed to be on their track.

How easy—how perfectly easy it would be, she thought, for even one resolute villain to break through those unprotected glass windows, and murder her, and rob the house, in safety and at leisure.

The cottage was half a mile from any other dwelling-house, and a quarter of a mile from any public road. The wildest shriek that might ever rise from dying victim in its rooms, could never be heard by human ears without.

As Drusilla remembered these circumstances her very soul grew sick with terror. And was it any wonder?

She was a young, delicate, impressible woman. And on this dark night, and in this isolated house she was quite alone. Her man-servant was in his loft over the stables, where he slept, with pistols by his side, to guard the valuable horses. And her maid-servant was in her attic over the kitchen, in a distant part of the dwelling.

Any determined thief could easily have entered the house and worked his will upon the poor young neglected wife and the property.

"Oh Alick, dear Alick, if you could know how much I suffer, you would not leave me so," she groaned, wringing her hands and rising in her restlessness to walk the floor.

But almost immediately her worshiping heart rebuked her for having cast even a shadow of reproach upon her husband, and she hastened to add,

"But it is my own fault. He has done everything for my comfort here; given me a beautiful home, and attentive servants. And I ought to be happy and courageous

Instead of that, I am sad and timid, and altogether unworthy to be called his wife. I do not wonder that he wearies of me."

So weeping and wringing her hands she paced up and down the floor, until in turning around she faced the front, unclosed windows, and suddenly uttered a piercing shriek and fell upon her face in a deadly swoon.

And well she might. For peering in at the window, from the darkness without was a livid white face—a man's stern face.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SPECTRAL FACE.

I felt my senses slackened with the fright
And a cold sweat shrilled down, o'er all my limbs,
As if I'd been dissolving into water.—DRYDEN.

And now the morning sky resumes her light,
And nature stands recovered of her night,
My fear, the last of ills, remains behind,
And horror heavy sick upon my mind.—IBID.

WHEN Drusilla recovered from her deathly swoon, the cold gray light of the winter morning was stealing through the unshuttered windows.

She lifted herself upon her elbow and gazed around her in utter bewilderment. Slowly, slowly came memory back to her. And with it the sense of fear and the instinct of flight. But before she could command her chilled and benumbed limbs, observation and reflection both assured her that there was now no cause for alarm.

The windows were still closed although the shutters were open. Everything in the room was in its usual place. Nothing had been disturbed. No intruder had been there. Whose ever the face had been that had looked in upon her through the window in the dead of night, it had done no harm.

The feeling of relief with which Drusilla acknowledged all this was speedily followed by one of extreme depression, for, by all the signs around her, she perceived that Alexander had not yet come home.

The lamps were still burning brightly in the face of the broadening day. And the untasted supper sat in its covered dishes on the hearth. But the fire had burned out and the room was cold.

Very drearily Drusilla arose; put out the lamps and then went up to her own chamber, and rang the bell for her servant, to make her a fire.

"Good patience, ma'am!" exclaimed the girl when she entered the chamber and found the bed undisturbed, and her mistress in the dress of the evening before. "Surely ma'am, you have never been sitting up all night?"

"I have not been in bed, as you see, Pina. Make me a fire as quickly as you can, for I am very cold. And then bring me some warm water and get me a cup of tea," said Drusilla.

When all these orders had been obeyed, and the unhappy young wife had refreshed herself with a wash, a change of dress and a cup of hyson, and reclined at rest in her easy-chair, she said to her handmaid:

"Pina—go and bring your brother here, I wish to question him in your presence."

The girl started at this unusual order, and looked alarmed, as if she supposed that herself and her brother were to be arraigned upon some grave charge.

But her mistress perceived her fears and hastened to relieve them by saying:

"Don't be afraid, Pina; there is nobody in fault that I know of. I only wish to question your brother upon a circumstance that occurred last night. Now go at once and fetch him here."

The girl left the room and went to find her fellow servant, who was in the kitchen eating his breakfast.

"You must just leave off gormandizing this minute and come up to *her* directly. Something's up; but I don't know what it is. She says she wants to question you about what happened last night, whatever that was, if you know, for I don't. I hope you've not been having unproper company, and misbehaving of yourself up there in the stable loft," said Pina, breathlessly, as she stood before her brother.

Leo, with his mouth full and his eyes starting, stared at his sister in stupefaction.

"Come, I say; come along with me up to the mistress," repeated Pina.

"What for? I haven't been a doing of nothing!" exclaimed the boy.

"Well, tell her so, then, and get her to believe it; but come along."

Leo reluctantly left his tea and muffins and bacon, and hesitatingly followed Pina to the presence of his mistress, where he also expected to be arraigned upon some charge of misconduct.

But the first words of the little lady set him at ease.

"Leo, have you seen any suspicious persons or any strangers lurking about here lately?" she inquired.

"Lor, no, ma'am, no person at all, not a soul, except 't'was master and you, ma'am, and Pina and me. The place is so out of the way, you know, ma'am. And so lonesome! Awful lonesome I calls it," answered the boy.

"No sportsmen after birds or other such small game?"

"Not a one, ma'am."

"Nor boys setting traps for snow-birds?"

"No, ma'am. Bless you, ma'am, hasn't I just told you how I've never seen a human face about the place, except it is you and master's and me and Pina's."

"Well, *I* saw a man's face between two and three o'clock after midnight, peeping in at the drawing-room windows," said the little lady very gravely.

"Indeed, ma'am!—whose could it a been?" inquired the boy in astonishment.

"That is what I do not know, and what I wished to ascertain."

The boy scratched his head and looked confounded.

"A face a peeping in at the windows in the dead of night! Bless us and save us!" he muttered to himself.

"I shall be feared to stay in the house nights when the master's not in," said Pina, turning as pale as one of her color could.

"I hope there is nothing to fear I shall speak to your master as soon as he comes home," said Drusilla, to reassure her domestics.

"But there's so many bugglers about," said Pina, with a shudder.

"And to be sure, the house is very unprotected like and

lonesome, and there's a deal of silver and gold into it," added Leo.

"I don't think the face was that of a burglar. If it had been, he might have entered the house and killed me, and taken what he wanted. There was nothing to prevent him," said Drusilla.

"Ah-h-h!" screamed Pina, "I shall never dare to sleep in the house when master is away."

"I shall ask your master to allow Leo to sleep in the house when he himself means to be absent," said Drusilla,

"But then they would steal the horses," objected Leo.

"Well, and if they do? Ain't the mistress's life, to say nothing of the gold and silver plate, and money and jewels, a deal more vallearble than the hosses, you——"

Pina stopped her tongue in time not to call her brother bad names in her mistress's presence.

"You may both go now. And, Pina, say nothing of what has happened. And you, Leo, keep your faculties on the alert and try to discover this mystery," said the little lady.

"What—what is it I am to do with my factories, ma'am?" inquired the boy, doubtingly.

"You are to keep your eyes and ears open and try to find out who it was that looked into my window," said Drusilla, smiling even in the midst of her sadness.

"Oh, yes, ma'am," answered the boy, as he bowed himself out, followed by his sister.

That day, owing to the alarm of the previous night and the long swoon, and the awakening in the cold room, Drusilla was unusually ill, both in mind and body; she remained in her chamber, wrapped in her dressing gown and reclining in her easy-chair.

But when evening came, from sheer force of habit, she roused herself and gave orders for a fire to be kindled and lamps to be lighted in the drawing-room, and supper to be prepared in case her husband should return.

And she dressed herself with care and went down and seated herself in her usual place to be ready to receive him.

But another long and lonely evening was before her with an unusual trial at its close.

At ten o'clock, as usual, Pina came in to ask her mistress if there were any more orders and to bid her good-night.

"No, Pina, I want nothing more this evening. You may go," said Drusilla.

"Won't you let me close the shutters, ma'am, for fear that gashly face will look in again?"

"No, Pina, they must be left open to guide your master home. The night is very dark, and here are no gas-lighted streets you know," smiled the little lady, determined not to yield to her fears.

"Well, ma'am," said the girl, hesitatingly—"Brother Leo, ma'am, he says if you would take the 'sponsibility to give him an order so to do, he would stay in the house until master comes home. Shall I tell him to do it, ma'am?"

"Certainly not. Leo must not disobey his master; nor can I interfere with Mr. Lyon's arrangements," answered the faithful wife.

Pina looked distressed; and raising and rolling her apron and casting down her eyes, she ventured to say:

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but won't you please be coaxed to let Brother Leo stay in the house to take care of us instead of the horses to-night?"

"By no means, Pina. Say no more about it, my good girl," answered the little matron, firmly.

The girl looked up at her mistress to see if she was really in earnest, and then burst into tears and sobbed forth the broken words:

"Well, ma'am, if you won't let Brother Leo stay in here to take care of the house an' us, plea—plea—please let me go 'long of him to the stable; becau—cau—cause I should die of fright to stay here with nobody but you, ma'am, please."

Drusilla looked at the maid in surprise and displeasure for a minute, and then her beautiful benevolence got the ascendancy over every other emotion, and she answered:

"You poor, timid girl, go if you wish."

"And you won't be ang—ang—angry 'long of me, ma'am, I hope?" inquired Pina, half ashamed of herself.

"No more than I should be angry with a hare for running away. It is your nature, as it is the hare's, to be cowardly."

"Well, then, ma'am, as Brother Leo is a waiting to know what he is to do, I may go now, mayn't I?"

"Yes, go."

"Good-night, ma'am, please; and I hope the Lord will take care of you."

"I do not doubt that He will, Pina. Good-night."

And so the girl retired.

And Drusilla was left quite alone, not only in the room but in the house. At first she felt very desolate and depressed and inclined to cry. But presently she reasoned with herself:

"That timid girl was really no protection. I am quite as safe without her as with her. I must trust in the Lord without whom 'the watchman watcheth in vain.' One of our wisest sages said, to become heroic, we must be sure to do that which we most fear to do. And I suppose his words must be received in their spirit rather than in the letter. I fear to jump into the fire, and I will not do so. And I fear, oh, how I fear, to stay in this house alone to-night! And all the more because I fear to do it, I *will* do it, rather than break up my husband's arrangements by calling Leo from the stables to guard me, and rather than torture that poor cowardly girl by making her stay here to keep me company. But I will not touch De Quincey's or Mrs. Crowe's works to-night to add to my morbid terrors. I will read the book of comfort."

And so saying, Drusilla took the Bible from its stand, and opened at the Psalms of David, those inspired outpourings of the soul, that have consoled and strengthened —how many millions of suffering and fainting hearts, for how many thousand years.

We must now leave Drusilla to meet the events of the night, and we must turn to Alexander, and relate the circumstances that had kept him away from his home these three days past—circumstances more ominous of evil to his gentle wife than anything which had as yet happened at Cedarwood.

CHAPTER XXV.

CAUGHT.

There's danger in that dazzling eye.
That woos thee with its witching smile;
Another when thou art not by
Those beaming looks would fain beguile.
FRANCES OSGOOD.

THIS was the short session of Congress, which would close on the fourth of March. The fashionable season, therefore, was nearly over, and it was ending in true carnival style.

There were morning concerts, theatricals, receptions, etc., all day; and there were evening concerts, theatricals, receptions, dinners, balls and parties all night. And "everybody who was anybody" was expected to "show" at all.

The belle of the season went everywhere; and often appeared at half a dozen different scenes of festivity or revelry in one night.

Her constant escort, Alexander Lyon, had no sinecure. He went with her everywhere: partly because his uncle willed that he should go with her, and he could not well refuse without explaining his reasons for doing so, and he could not explain, without acknowledging his secret marriage with Drusilla; partly because he imagined himself in love with his brilliant cousin; but mostly because he determined that Richard Hammond should not supplant him in his office of escort.

For two days during which he had not appeared at his home, he had been on a "perpetual" round of pleasure with Anna. The first day he attended her to a breakfast given at the Executive Mansion; to a *matinée musicale* at the French minster's; to an afternoon debate in the Senate-Chamber; to a dinner-party at General Stott's; and to the theatre to see a celebrated commedienne; and lastly, to a supper at General Lyon's room; all this in one day and evening; so, of course, he could not get home

that night. The next day he went with her, first to a wedding at St. John's church, and to the wedding-breakfast at the house of the bride's mother; then to hear part of a very interesting case at the Supreme Court; next to the reception of a cabinet minister; then to an exhibition of paintings; from that to a dinner party at the Brazilian minister's; and, finally, to the very grandest ball of the carnival, given by the wife of a millionaire, who had taken a furnished house for the season, and reserved herself for this final magnificent affair.

It was considered a great distinction to get an invitation to this ball. Only the "elite" were invited, and all the "elite" were there.

Anna, restricted by her mourning to a certain style of dress was still, as always, the most beautiful and the most admired woman of the assembly. And Alexander was proud of her as his reputed betrothed.

In all the success of the season Anna had never had such a dazzling triumph as upon this evening. She seemed to turn all heads with her bewitching beauty, until at length her own brain seem dizzied with her conquests. She grew capricious and exasperating. Alexander hovered around her; and he would not have left her for a moment that evening if she had not, with a furtive and angry flash of her blazing blue eyes, peremptorily ordered him to leave her. And to complete his mortification and despair, she beckoned Richard Hammond to come to her, and she retained him in her suite for the rest of the evening.

Alexander was half maddened by this conduct of his cousin. His blood boiled when he saw her smiling upon his rival; and when he saw that rival basking in those smiles; and he would have liked to have throttled Richard then and there; but he knew that it would never do to make a scene in that place; so he stood scowling and muttering curses, and planning vengeance.

General Lyon, who for once had been tempted to come out in the evening for the sake of being present at this great ball, and meeting many of his old friends whom he knew would be there, saw the provoking behavior of the young pair and resolved that as soon as he should have them at home he would favor the coquette and the rival

with a good sound reprimanding lecture. But the festivities were kept up all night; and so the old soldier, who broke down at about one o'clock, was forced to retire and leave the beauty and her rival lovers to their own devices.

Not, however, without whispering to each of the delinquents in turn:

"I shall want to see you at my rooms to-morrow at twelve noon."

It was broad daylight when the ball broke up.

Anna was at length under the necessity of giving Richard his congé, and resigning herself to the charge of Alexander, who, having escorted her to the ball, was of course obliged to take her home.

On reaching her lodgings, Anna went to bed to sleep off her fatigue. And Alexander, who had hardly spoken during the drive home, hurried off to his rooms at the Blank House, to procure what rest he could before the hour at which he was to wait upon his uncle.

At twelve o'clock precisely, the old soldier, having breakfasted, was seated in his private parlor waiting for his fractious young people.

Anna was the first to come in. And her grandfather was just clearing his throat to begin upon her when the door was opened and Mr. Richard Hammond was announced.

"Ah! very well, it is just as easy to speak to you both at the same time," said the old gentleman, turning around in his chair and facing the culprits.

And very imposing looked the veteran as he sat there with his majestic person, grave countenance and silver hair and beard.

And the young cousins were certainly awed by the dignity of his aspect as well as abashed by a sense of their own follies.

"Come and stand before me, sir and madame." (This gentleman of the old school, always on ceremonious occasions, addressed ladies, whether married or single, by the title of "madame," which in its true meaning is simply *ma dame*, or my lady, and applies with equal propriety to maids or matrons.)

"Sir and madame, come and stand before me," he said.

And the young people, with the reverence they had

been educated to show to age, approached and stood before the old man.

Their ready obedience mollified him to a certain extent, for when he spoke again it was in a milder manner.

"My daughter and my nephew," he said, "your conduct lately, and especially your deportment last evening, has shamed and grieved me. It might be said of our ancient house, as it has been said of another noble line, that all the men were brave and all the women pure. Let me not see in you two the first exceptions to that proud rule."

The cheeks of the young lady and the brow of the young gentleman flushed crimson with mortification; but neither spoke, and the old gentleman continued:

"No brave man ever tries to supplant an accepted suitor. And no pure woman ever encourages the rival of her betrothed."

The flush deepened on the cheeks of Anna and on the brow of Richard, and both cast down their eyes, but neither opened their lips.

"And," proceeded the veteran hero, "I should blush for the daughter of my house who should prove a coquette, as I should blush for the son who should prove a coward. My children, I hope I have said enough. Be brave as all the men of our line, and pure as all its women."

"Richard," said Anna, with eyes flashing through their tears, "Cousin Richard, you must bid me farewell here, now, and forever."

He took the hand she extended to him, and holding it within his own, turned to his uncle and said:

"Sir, you *have* said enough, and so has my cousin. What it costs me to leave her, only heaven knows. But you have made an appeal that cannot be resisted, and I bow before it. Farewell, sir! And Anna, my cousin, good-by. Good-by! God bless you."

And after wringing Anna's hand, he dropped it, bowed to his uncle, and hastened away to conceal the tears that rushed to his eyes.

Anna threw herself down upon the sofa, buried her head in its pillows, and sobbed convulsively.

The old man, with his hands clasped behind his back, and his silver-haired head bowed upon his bosom, walked

slowly up and down the floor. At length, he came to his sobbing daughter, and laying his hand tenderly upon her head, said:

"I am sorry, Anna. I am sorry, my child. I would I could bear all pain in your stead. But, Anna, I cannot bear this pang for you. And you know that faith must be kept, though hearts be grieved—aye, or——"

Before he could finish his sentence, the door was opened, and Mr. Lyon was announced.

On seeing Alexander enter, Anna started up from the sofa, and hurried from the room.

"Good-morning, sir. I hope I have not disturbed my cousin?" said Mr. Lyon, bowing, and shaking hands with his uncle.

"Sit down, Alick," said the old man, without replying to his observation. "I wish to speak to you."

Alexander seated himself, and looked attentive.

"Alick, I saw how much annoyed you were last night by Richard's marked attentions to Anna, and her seeming encouragement of them."

"'Seeming,' sir! It was more than seeming; and much more than mere 'encouragement.' Sir, she solicited those attentions," said Alexander, with scarcely suppressed indignation, and entirely forgetting that *he* certainly had no right to object to all this.

"Tut, tut, tut, tut, boy, that is very strong language. However, I can overlook it, as the provocation was very great. But Alick, it was only the mischievous spirit of a spoiled beauty on her part, and the vanity of a coxcomb on his I have had them both up before me this morning, and spoken some words to them that they will not readily forget. Anna has dismissed Richard once for all. And he has bid us good-by, and is gone for good."

Alexander looked up in surprise and pleasure.

"Yes, it is so," said the General.

"Excuse me, sir, was that the reason why my cousin was so very much overcome, and ran from the room as soon as I came in?" questioned Alexander, his jealous doubts again awakening.

"Um-um, well, you see I had said some pretty severe words to her and made her cry. But it is well she is gone, as I have something to say to you in private."

"Yes, sir?" said Alexander, hesitatingly and with a guilty twinge, for his conscience immediately awakened his fears. What was it his uncle wanted to say to him? Had the old man got an inkling of the cottage at Cedarwood and its inmates? Scarcely likely he thought, but still he felt uneasy until the General said:

"Alexander my boy, it is now nearly five months since the lamented death of your dear mother my esteemed sister-in-law. And I do not for my part, see why your marriage with Anna should be longer deferred. Long engagements are very injudicious indeed; and your engagement has been an exceedingly prolonged one. And I think now that it should terminate in marriage. Come, what do you say?"

Alexander turned hot an dcold; attempted to speak and failed.

The old gentleman ascribed all his emotion to excess of love, surprise and joy.

"Yes, my boy, I really mean it," he said, smiling. "To defer the affair longer would not be so much of a respectful tribute to the memory of your dear mother, as a superstitious observance. Come! find your tongue, man! find your tongue!"

"The question must be referred to my beautiful betrothed, sir. It will be for her to decide it," said Alexander,

"Oh, aye, certainly, to be sure; it will be for her to decide it; but it will be for *you* to induce her to decide it in your favor, my lad," chuckled the old gentleman. "And as you are to take her to see Saviola's new picture to-day, you will have a fine opportunity of doing so," he added.

At that moment the door was again opened, and Commodore Staughton was announced.

And as the old naval hero entered the room, Alexander arose and bowed and made his escape.

But Mr. Lyon did not attend his cousin to the picture gallery that afternoon. Anna pleaded excessive fatigue, and with good reason, and kept her room until evening, when she went, attended by Alexander, to a reception at the Executive Mansion, that was the last and greatest of the season.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A MEMORABLE NIGHT.

'Tis only the obscure is terrible;
Imagination frames events unknown,
In wild fantastic shapes of hideous ruin,
And what it fears, creates—HANNAH MORE.

It was two hours after midnight, on a keen March morning, when Alexander Lyon, in the face of a fierce northwest wind, rode on towards his almost forsaken home.

His frame of mind was not enviable.

Never since he had entered upon his life of deception had his double-dealing so much disturbed him. The discovery of his duplicity was now impending. His uncle had proposed his immediate marriage with his betrothed; and should the obstinate old gentleman persist in pushing on the project, and should Anna raise no objection to it, there would be no other course for Alexander to pursue but frankly to confess his secret marriage with Drusilla, and so brave the old soldier's roused wrath, and bear the young beauty's bitter scorn.

Yet, still, Mr. Lyon resolved to delay the degradation of such a disclosure, and the shame of such a scene as long as possible, for still he hoped, "out of this nettle danger to pluck the flower safety."

It was possible, he thought, that his uncle might not persevere in his purpose, and it was probable that Anna herself would be the first to object to a precipitated wedding, and would insist that the programme should be followed, and that the full year of mourning for his mother should elapse before Alexander should claim her hand.

There yet remained nearly eight months to the end of this probation. In this time, how much, he reflected, might happen to deliver him from his disagreable dilemma.

Drusilla might die.

He felt a pang of shame and sorrow as this idea en-

tered his mind. Yet still he entertained it. Drusilla was now declining in health, and she might die. And in such a case he should be free from the trammels of his reckless marriage, and from the necessity of making the humiliating confession that he had ever worn them.

Agitated by these evil thoughts, he rode rapidly onward towards Cedarwood.

As he entered the private road leading through the dark wood he saw the beacon lights of his home in the drawing-room windows, shining out to guide him on his way.

"She is waiting for me, poor child," he said, half in compassion, half in contempt. "Still waiting and watching as she has been doing no doubt, for the last three nights—the last three nights! Ah! and how many nights behind them! Poor little miserable! I wish I had never seen her!"

So muttering to himself Alexander rode round to the stable and put up his horse, and then walked back to the house and knocked at the front door.

It did not fly open as usual at his summons, so he knocked again, louder than before; but there was no response.

Then he sounded an alarm upon the knocker, and waited for the result.

But when the noise he made died away, all remained silent in the house.

"What the deuce is the meaning of this, I should like to know?" he inquired of himself, as he went down the steps and climbed up to the sill of the front windows, and looked into the drawing-room.

The room was brilliantly lighted up, but the fire in the grate had burned low; the untasted supper covered up on the hearth had probably grown cold; and the little guardian angel of the place was nowhere to be seen.

"Where the mischief can she be?" he asked himself, and having frequently expressed annoyance that she should sit up late to let him in, he now felt vexation that she should have gone to rest, and left him to get in as he could.

There was nothing now for him to do but to go back to the stable and rouse up his man-servant, and get the

key of the kitchen door, by which that functionary always let himself in in the morning to make the fires.

Leo slept in the loft over the carriage-room, which was shut off from the horse stalls, and locked within.

And it required considerable knocking and calling before the man could be awakened.

When at last he aroused he started up in terror shouting:

"Who's there? Thieves! murder! fire!—go away, or I'll shoot!"

"Coward, and fool!—come down and open the door!" loudly and angrily exclaimed his master.

But before Mr. Lyon had fairly got the words out of his mouth Leo put his pistol out of the window, and pulled the trigger and blazed away.

The ball whizzed past within an inch of the ear of Alexander, who instinctively dodged and shrank out of the range of fire, as he shouted:

"Stop that, you villain! What do you mean, you poltroon? It is I, your master."

But the man was mad with terror; and even while his master spoke, fired again and again, until he had discharged six shots from his revolver; and then he retired from the window.

"And now, you scoundrel!" again shouted Mr. Lyon, as soon as silence was restored. "Do you hear me—do you know me now? I am your master. Come down and open the door; I want you."

A minute passed, and then the voice of Leo was heard from above, calling cautiously:

"Marse Alick, Marse Alick! Is it you, sir?"

"Of course it is I, you cursed idiot! who else should it be? And it is very well for you that I am living to answer, and you are not a murderer. Come down instantly, I say, and open the door."

"Lor, Leo, chile, it is marster; I knows his speech So let him in," spoke another low voice, which Mr. Lyon, in astonishment, recognized as belonging to Pina.

Another minute passed, and then Leo came down, with his teeth chattering from cold and fright, and opened the door.

"And now, you villain! what have you got to say for

yourself, that I shall not have you committed to jail to-morrow on charge of assault with intent to kill?" angrily demanded Mr. Lyon.

"Oh, Marse Alick! I'm as much mortified at the mistake as ever I can be. Indeed, sir, I thought it was horse thieves, and I was duty bounden to 'fend the hosses, you know, sir," pleaded Leo.

"Umph; well, you must be more careful another time, my man. Your mistake might have cost you your neck, you know."

"'Deed, sir, I—if I had been so misfortunate as to hurt you I shouldn't a cared *that* for my neck! I should a wanted to a' hanged myself 'dout waitin' for the judge to do it," said the boy, so earnestly that he at once disarmed his master.

"Very well, I dare say you speak truly. And now let me have the key of the back door; I wish to get in the house and go to bed. Your mistress has shut up the place and retired. I suppose she has given up all thoughts of seeing me to-night. Where is the key?"

"Here it is, sir; shall I go on to the house with you?"

"No, there is no need. Oh, by the way—was not that Pina's voice I heard speaking to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And pray how comes she to be sleeping down here in the stable-loft, when she should be in the house with her mistress? And now I think of it, how *is* your mistress?"

"Ah, purty much the same as usual, sir," said Leo, trying to evade the "previous question."

"I am glad to hear it. But about Pina; how comes she to be sleeping here?"

"Well sir, you see there's been a 'larm at the house and Pina she was feared——"

"'An alarm at the house?' What sort of an alarm?" anxiously inquired Mr. Lyon.

"Well, sir, if you will please to let me walk along home with you I could tell you as I go along."

"Come then and be quick."

"Oh lor, Brother Leo, ask master to wait for me, please. I don't dare to stay here all alone by myself!"

exclaimed Pina, scuttling down from the loft as fast as she could come.

"Hurry then, you provoking fool; and mind, I have an account to settle with you when you come," said Mr. Lyon, as he stamped his feet and clapped his hands to keep his almost congealed blood in circulation, while the fierce wind whirled his riding-coat round and round.

Meantime Leo quickly took down his own overcoat from its peg in the coach-room, and put it on.

"Now then! How dared you to leave your mistress and come down here to sleep, eh?" angrily demanded Mr. Lyon, as Pina came to the side of her brother.

"Please, sir, it was along of the fright. And mistress said I might. And no more wasn't she angry 'long o' me for it," whimpered the girl.

"Your kind mistress is never angry with anybody for anything," answered Mr. Lyon, doing justice to his neglected young wife, on this occasion at least. And," he added, "I will hear what she has to say about the matter before I excuse you. And now, Leo," he inquired turning to the boy, "what about this alarm at the house? I hope it was a false one. Was it of thieves?"

"Well, sir, I don't rightly know whether it was a false alarm or not, nor likewise whether it was thieves."

"Tell me all you know of it."

"If you please, I don't know anything about it personably myself. It was not me as seen the face at the window in the dead hour of the night, it was my mistress."

"'A face at the window in the dead of night?'" echoed Mr. Lyon, in astonishment.

"Yes, sir."

"What night?"

"Last night, sir, about this hour, as I understand."

"Give me the particulars."

Leo began and related the story, as he had received it from his mistress.

"That is most extraordinary and it must be investigated," said Mr. Lyon, in a musing and anxious manner, as the boy finished the tale. "But," he added, turning sternly to the two servants, "how came you, you cowardly brutes, to leave your young mistress alone in the house to-

night after such an alarm? I feel inclined to part with you both."

"Oh, sir," said Leo, "I begged my mistress to allow me to stay in the house to keep guard, I did, indeed, sir; but she wouldn't so much as hear of it. She said how she wouldn't interfere 'long of your arrangements, sir; and so she ordered me to go back to the stables and take care o' the hosses."

"And indeed, master, indeed, sir," put in Pina, "I did say to my mist'ess wasn't her safety of more 'count than the dumb brutes; but she wouldn't hear to me, no more'n to Brother Leo."

"And so she sent you both out of the house!" exclaimed Mr. Lyon, frowning darkly.

"Indeed she did, sir," answered Pina.

"And remained in it alone?"

"Yes, sir," replied Leo.

"Humph!" growled Mr. Lyon, and his anger was diverted from his offending servants to his neglected wife. An insane suspicion took possession of him, and he mentally connected the mysterious face at the window, with the circumstance of Drusilla's sending her servants from the house, and he drew an inference which nothing but the madness of jealousy could have inspired, and he hurried on at a pace which even his agile young servants found it hard to keep up with.

They went around to the back door and opened it, and Mr. Lyon, calling his servants to follow him through the house, groped his way along the dark back passages to the octagon hall and up the stairs to his wife's chamber, which was dimly lighted by a night-taper on the mantel-piece and a smoldering fire in the grate. The room was vacant and evidently had not been occupied since the morning.

"Where can she be?" he inquired, and in an accession of anxiety he hurried through the other rooms of the upper story; but found them all empty.

Then, still attended by his servants, he went below stairs and searched the library and the bird room. But neither Drusilla nor anyone else could be found.

"I looked into the drawing-room before I entered the house—looked in through the unshuttered front windows and I saw that no one was in there. But I will look again,"

muttered Mr. Lyon, in extreme astonishment and anxiety, as he passed into the apartment in question.

It was still brilliantly lighted up and he could see into every corner of it; but he saw, besides the usual furniture, only the neatly spread little supper table; the untasted supper covered up on the hearth; and the easy-chair and slippers near the blackened fire that had quite gone out.

But his wife was nowhere to be seen in the room.

"This is most inexplicable!" he exclaimed, in consternation, as he turned and looked at his servants, who stood near him aghast with terror. "At what hour did your mistress dismiss you?"

"At ten o'clock, sir; but we didn't go out of the house till nearly half-past, as it took us some little time to rake out the kitchen fire and fasten up the place," answered Leo, while Pina fell to sobbing.

"Stop that noise, will you, and follow me. I will search the rooms over the kitchen; though I suppose it will be quite in vain," said Mr. Lyon, grimly, as there entered his mind the cruel suspicion that his neglected and lonely young wife had actually left her home.

They searched first the kitchen, pantry and laundry, on the first floor of the back building. Then they went up and searched the servants' rooms on the second floor. But without success.

"She is gone," said Mr. Lyon to himself, as he led the way back to the drawing-room And in the strangely blended emotions of astonishment and mortification, there was also a delusive feeling of satisfaction and hope. If she was gone, he should be free. Her departure was his deliverance.

As he re-entered the drawing-room, still attended by his servants, he saw the broad morning light streaming in at the front windows. He ordered Leo to take away the lamps and to clear out the grate and kindle a new fire. And he directed Pina to remove the supper service and prepare his breakfast; for, under all the circumstances, he felt too much excited to think of lying down to sleep.

He walked up and down the room, while his servants quickly executed his orders. And soon every vestige of the evening's untasted repast and extinguished fire was

removed. And the clean hearth and glowing grate invited Alexander to repose himself in his easy-chair.

After a while Pina appeared with the table linen in her hand, and inquired, respectfully:

"If you please, sir, will you have the breakfast laid here, or in the dining-room?"

"In the dining-room, of course," answered Mr. Lyon.

"The dining-room," as the reader knows, was but a cozy, elegant, little recess, curtained off from the drawing-room, and only large enough to hold a small table and two chairs, for the young couple's tête-à-tête dinners.

As Pina now drew aside the crimson curtain, she uttered a wild scream, and stood transfixed and gazing down upon some object near her feet.

Alexander sprang up to see what had frightened her; but as he put aside the curtain, and saw what was under it, he started back with an irrepressible cry of horror.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A GREAT DISCOVERY.

Oh, fatal opportunity!
That work'st our thoughts into desires, desires
To resolutions; and these being ripe and ready,
Then giv'st them birth and brings't them forth to action.—DENHAM.

The means that fortune yields must be embraced
And not neglected; else if fortune would,
And we will not, her offers we refuse,
And miss the means of action and success.—SHAKESPEARE.

SHE whom they had sought so vainly, lay there, doubled up, on the floor, and partly covered by the dropping folds of the curtain.

"Oh, master! Oh, sir! She is dead! She is murdered! She is, indeed, sir, and the thieves have been in and done it!" cried Pina, recovering her voice and wringing her hands in grief and terror.

And her dreadful words seemed to be true.

Mr. Lyon could not speak. He silently lifted the lifeless form, and shuddering to see how helplessly the head

and limbs fell over his arms, he bore it into the drawing-room, and laid it on the sofa.

Pina followed him, and stood sobbing and wringing her hands.

He knelt down by the body and gazed on the marble face, the half-open eyes, and the rigid lips drawn tightly from the white and glistening teeth.

He hastily unfastened the front of her dress, and put his hand in her bosom to feel if her heart yet beat. It seemed still.

He put his ear down to listen if her lungs yet moved. They were motionless.

He felt her hands and feet. They were cold and stiff. Then he arose and stood gazing upon the body.

"Oh, is she dead? Is you sure?" inquired Pina, with tears streaming down her face.

"Yes. She seems to have been dead some hours," groaned Alexander, with his own face as white as that of the lifeless form before him.

"Oh, master! Oh, sir! The thieves broke in and done it, didn't they? Didn't they?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Lyon, speaking slowly and softly. "There is no evidence of the late presence of thieves in the house. Nothing as yet is missing. And there is no sign of blood upon her clothing."

"Oh, master, but her dress is black, and wouldn't show it plain."

Alexander knew this to be true, and he also knew that some wounds bleed only inwardly. So he began to examine her body. First he unloosed her beautiful hair, and ran his fingers through its tresses, and felt all over her head. But apparently she had received no sort of injury there.

While he was proceeding with this inspection, Pina suddenly started up and ran out of the room.

He made a most careful examination, but found no mark of violence upon her person.

And yet he thought she must have come to her death suddenly and violently; since she had been alive and in her usual health between ten and eleven o'clock on the preceding evening, and now was dead, and apparently had been so for several hours.

He had scarcely finished his examination, when Pina rushed back into the room, holding a fragment of looking-glass in her hand and exclaiming eagerly:

"Try this! Oh, dear master, try this! Lay it to her lips and hold it there a minute or so, and if there's any moisture on it, it is a sign that there's a little life left, and where there's life, you know, if there's ever so little, there's hope."

Mr. Lyon silently took the piece of glass, and laid it flat with the bright side to the cold lips, and stood watching the result.

"Oh, sir, I'm glad I happened to think of it! I know'd a woman, I did, who fell down into a fit, and lay for dead all day long; for her breath had stopped, and her heart had stopped, and she was cold and stiff; and they were going to lay her out, when somebody said 'try a glass,' and so they tried it, and sure enough, after they held it over her lips a little while, there was a moisture on it, and so they knew she still breathed ever so little, though they couldn't perceive it in any other way but by the glass—and so——"

"Hush, stop," said Mr. Lyon, interrupting the garrulous girl, and examining the glass.

There was a dimness on its bright surface.

"You are right. Life is not yet quite extinct. She still breathes slightly."

"Oh, sir, I'm so glad! I feel as glad as if——"

"Hurry and make a fire in her bed-chamber, while I carry her up-stairs," said Mr. Lyon, again interrupting the stream of the girl's talk.

Pina flew down-stairs to get kindling-wood, and to startle her brother with the news that their mistress had been found in a fainting fit so deep that she seemed dead, or dying, at the last gasp, and it was doubtful whether she would ever come out of it.

Meanwhile, Alexander lifted the insensible form and carried it up-stairs, to the bed-chamber, and laid it on the bed.

Pina soon came in with the kindling wood and rapidly revived the fire that had not yet gone out.

Then, while her master ran down-stairs and searched for restoratives, she undressed her mistress and put her

between soft, warm blankets, in the bed, and began to rub her hands and feet in the hope of restoring the arrested circulation.

Mr. Lyon returned with brandy and ammonia, and then master and maid used the most vigorous means for recovering the unconscious sufferer.

For nearly two hours they worked over her; but their efforts seemed utterly unavailing.

At length when they were almost ready to give over in despair, Alexander perceived a slight fluttering near the heart of his wife. With revived hope, he redoubled his efforts and soon had the satisfaction of seeing further signs of returning life. Her chest labored and heaved; her lips trembled and parted; and then she gasped and opened her eyes.

"Drusa, Drusa, my darling, do you know me?" he inquired, looking anxiously in her face.

But she only gazed at him, with wide open, soft, inexpressive eyes, without replying.

He hastily mixed a little ammonia and water and raised her head and put the cordial to her lips. She drank it mechanically; but it immediately revived her.

"Drusa, my little Drusa, do you know me now?" he inquired, setting the glass aside and bending over her.

She looked at him with infinite love, put her arms up around his neck, drew his head down to hers and kissed him tenderly.

He returned her soft caresses; for while he gazed on her sweet, patient, loving face, and reflected that she was just rescued, as it were, from the jaws of death, he felt all his compassion, if not his affection for her revived.

"What caused your swoon, my little Drusa?" he inquired.

But a spasm of pain, or fear, passed over her face and form, and she shuddered and closed her eyes.

"Beg your pardon, sir, but if I was you, I wouldn't ask no questions yet," said Pina in a low respectful voice.

"You are right again," he answered.

And he contented himself with sitting by his wife's bed and holding her hand, and occasionally bending down and kissing her forehead.

"If you please sir, to let me go down and bring my

mistress up a cup of strong tea and a bit of dry toast, I think if she could be got to take it, it would do her good," said Pina.

"Go then," replied Mr. Lyon.

And as the girl left the room, he stooped and whispered to his wife.

"I hope you are better, love."

"Yes," she answered.

"I will not try your strength with questions, now; but as soon as you are able, you will tell me what caused your deep swoon."

She drew his head down to hers and answered in a low faint voice:

"*It was the face at the window.*"

"The face at the window! again last night?"

She nodded; and her lips grew so white and her eyes so wild with terror, that he hastened to soothe her.

"There, there is no danger now, my little Drusa! I am here by your side. Compose yourself for the present, and when you have quite recovered you shall tell me all about it, and the affair shall be investigated."

He laid his hand upon her brow; and she with a sigh of relief, closed her eyes.

Presently Pina came in with a little tray upon which stood a cup of tea and a small piece of dried toast.

At Alexander's entreaty and with his assistance, Drusilla sat up and drank the tea and ate the toast, and then sank back upon her pillow and after a while, with her hand in his, fell into a natural and refreshing sleep.

Alexander still watched her for five or ten minutes longer, and then after glancing up at the time-piece on the mantel-shelf and seeing that it was nearly eleven o'clock he slipped his hand from hers, told Pina to take his place by the bedside, and then left the chamber.

He went down-stairs into the drawing-room and rang the bell.

Leo answered it.

"Serve my breakfast immediately and then go and saddle my horse and bring him around to the door," were Mr. Lyon's directions.

Leo, much wondering that his master should leave his

mistress at such a time, went out of the room to obey his orders.

Breakfast was soon served. Alexander despatched it in haste, and then went up-stairs to change his dress for his ride in to town

When he found himself alone in his dressing-room, all the embarrassments of his false position—forgotten dur. ing the exciting events that had followed his late arrival at home—were now recalled to mind.

In an hour or two he should meet his uncle and his cousin. The former would expect that he should make his proposal for immediate marriage with Anna, and the latter would be ready to meet it.

He might either make the anticipated proposal or omit to do it.

If he should make it, and his cousin should meet it favorably, the embarrassments of his position would be multiplied a thousand-fold, for certainly he could not marry two wives; neither could he, after having committed himself by his proposal, confess his prior marriage.

If he should omit to make the proposal at all, such omission would subject him to suspicion and severe cross-examination by his uncle and the grandfather of his betrothed.

His first hope, then, was in being able to evade the dilemma by procrastination; and his second hope was that Anna herself might take the responsibility of insisting upon a further delay of the wedding.

As for his secret marriage with Drusilla, he was now resolved, come what might, that he would never reveal it; because he felt sure, if he should do so, that his uncle and cousin would both discard him, and she would become the wife of his rival.

But even in the midst of these evil thoughts, he started as an absent-minded walker might at seeing himself on the brink of a dreadful precipice,—yes, started with a sudden consciousness of what a villain he was growing to be—he who up to this time had been a man of stainless honor.

While agitated by these emotions, he was mechanically dressing himself. He went to his wardrobe to search for

a thick coat, for the morning was still bitterly cold, and the overcoat that he had worn on the previous day and night had received some damage from Leo's frantic pistol shots.

He took down coat after coat, but they were all too thin.

At length, far back in the wardrobe, he found one that he had not worn for many months. It belonged to the traveling suit that he had worn when he went to Alexandria to meet Drusilla and went to the parson to marry her.

With feelings of sadness, regret and compunction, he turned the garment about and looked at it. Then he carefully brushed it and put it on, buttoned it closely, and thrust both hands in his pockets to push them down. In doing so, he felt a folded paper. And in listless curiosity he took it out, opened it, and looked at it.

In an instant all his listlessness vanished. He held it from him, and gazed, and gazed at it with his eyes dilating, his lips parting, and his face blanching with what would have seemed at first view to be amazement and horror, but which soon proved to be delight and triumph.

He could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses. He suspected that he was dreaming. He pinched himself to prove that he was awake.

Then he suddenly dropped into a chair, waved the paper above his head, and burst into a loud laugh.

"Well," he said, "if I had been the most consummate schemer that ever lived, I could not have plotted for myself better than fortune has planned for me. Now, then, Mr. Richard Hammond! Let us see now what are your prospects of ultimately winning the beauty and the heiress! But little Drusa! poor little Drusa! patient, loving little Drusa! Thank fortune that you neither know nor suspect anything of this matter! And you *must* neither know nor suspect it yet awhile! For the knowledge, or even the very suspicion of this, would go near to kill you. Very, very gradually must you be prepared for it, my darling; very, very gently must the truth be broken to you, my poor little girl!"

He felt now no embarrassment as to his relations, present or prospective, with his betrothed and her grand-

father. He was ready to propose to Anna the next day, and to marry her in a month after, if expedient.

For the paper that he had found in the pocket of his wedding coat, and now held in his hand, proved beyond the shadow of a doubt, that his marriage with poor Drusilla was informal, null and void; that it had always been so, and that he was legally free to love and to wed whomsoever he should please.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HIS LOVE.

His is the love that only lives,
While the cheek is fresh and red;
His is the love that only thrives,
Where the pleasure feast is spread.—ELIZA COOK.

ALTHOUGH that little paper furnished a proof that Alexander Lyon was as free from marriage-bonds as he wished to be, yet it would have been better for his own purpose for him to have burned it at once.

But with that strange unwillingness which some people feel to destroy even a dangerous document, he carefully folded it up and put it into his little looking-glass drawer.

Then he went into the next chamber and spoke to Pina, who was still watching by her mistress's bed.

"Has she moved?" he asked.

"Oh no, sir, she sleeps very sound," answered the girl.

"That is well. Keep her very still. Keep the room dark and quiet. Do not leave her until my return. If she should wake in the meantime, tell her that I was compelled to ride into town this morning; but that I shall be back early. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir; and I will be very careful to do as you say."

Alexander then drew on his gloves and left the room. When he got down stairs he repeated to Leo his orders, that the house should be kept very quiet. Then he mounted his horse and rode rapidly towards the city. He was

an hour behind his usual time, and it was noon when he reached his room at the hotel. He was glad to find out by inquiry that no one had called that morning to see him. So he went down-stairs to call a cab, to take him to his uncle's lodgings. He found the hotel halls, as well as the city streets, full of bustle. Yesterday had been the last day of the session of Congress, and to-day there was a general evacuation of the city, by members of the house and senate, and by the troops of friends and strangers that attend or follow them to and from Washington.

Alick found it hard to get an empty cab, so he hailed an omnibus, and rode on as far as it would take him to his uncle's lodgings, and then got out and walked the rest of the way.

The General had just left his bedroom; but he received his visitor very cordially.

"I tell you what, Alick, these fashionable hours don't suit an old-fashioned fellow like myself. And I am heartily glad the season is over. As soon as Anna comes down I shall tell her to give orders to pack up; for we shall leave in a day or two—just as soon as the great crush of travelers shall thin off, so that the steamboats and the railway trains will not be so overcrowded. By the way, I hope you made it all right with Anna last night?"

"Please to recollect, my dear sir, that I could not possibly get an opportunity of speaking to her in private. But I shall make one to-day."

"All right, my dear boy, and I will help you. And I hope you will make up your mind to leave this babel when we do. What is to prevent you, eh? You might go back with us to the old hall."

"I should be very happy to do so, sir; and if I can make arrangements——"

"Oh, bosh about arrangements! What arrangements can an idle young man like you have to make? None that could not be made in twenty-four hours. And we shall not leave for at least forty-eight."

"I will try to be ready, sir."

As Alick spoke, Anna came in.

She wore an elegant morning robe of white cashmere lined and faced with quilted white satin, and trimmed with black velvet and jet, and fastened around the waist with a

black silk cord and tassels. She seemed no worse for her long season of fashionable dissipation, but looked stately, blooming and beautiful as ever.

Alexander arose, and greeting her with more than usual empressement, led her to a seat.

The breakfast was served. And the General telling Alexander that it would do quite as well for a luncheon, invited him to sit down to the table.

While lingering over the late morning meal, they talked of the just closed session of Congress and season of fashion, and the General again pressed Alick to join his party at old Lyon Hall. And in the presence of his beautiful betrothed, Alick could neither refuse nor hesitate to accept the invitation. So he gave his promise to accompany his uncle and cousin to their home.

After the breakfast was finished, and the service was removed, the General arose, saying that he would go down into the reading-room and look over the morning papers, he left the parlor.

Alexander and Anna were alone.

"At last, then, I have the opportunity of speaking to you, that I have so long desired," whispered Alick, as he went and took a seat on the sofa, by the side of his betrothed.

She received him very quietly, if not coldly.

He then went on to lament the repeated interruptions that had so long delayed their union, and to press her to name an early day for the wedding.

"Your great haste is of very late date, Alick. I saw no signs of such impatience, until within the last few weeks," she answered coolly.

He gave her a deprecating look, and pleaded:

"My love was chilled and my pride was hurt by your marked preference for my rival."

"Hush!" said Anna, quickly. "Let poor Dick alone. He is honest, if he is wild. I have sent him away. Let him go in peace."

"Just so! Let him go. But you will grant my request?"

"I have no wish to break off our engagement, Alick. I will not be the first woman of my race to break my pledged word. I will give you my promised hand; but

not as soon as you ask. Let the year of mourning end first."

"That will be in November."

"Yes; you must wait until then."

Alexander heaved a deep sigh, and got up and walked the room, and looked a great deal more disappointed than he felt.

In truth—now he knew that his hand was free from legal fetters to Drusilla, he felt that his heart was more bound to her by affection than he had lately believed. And now his hated rival was out of his way, he found that he was not half so much in love with his beautiful cousin as he had imagined.

And so he really had no more desire to hurry the wedding than had Anna herself.

He wanted more time to break with her whom he had so long taken for his wife. And as he walked up and down the floor, he was thinking most of her.

"Poor little Drusa,' he thought. "Good little Drusa, from this hour she must be to me, only as a dear little sister. But our parting must not be abrupt. Such a shock would be her death-blow, poor child! Little by little I must leave her. This trip to the old hall will be a good start. She need not know where or why I go. I can tell her that this business connected with my father's will, takes me into Virginia for a while—and this will be true, so far as it goes. After a few weeks I will return to her, but only as a brother, and will stay with her but a few days. And then the second absence shall be longer than the first, and the second return to her, shorter. And so, gently, most gently will I lose the tie that binds her to me, so that when the final parting comes she shall scarcely feel it."

So, as falsely as wickedly, he reasoned. For it would have been more merciful to have broken with her at once than to leave her by degrees. Much kinder would be the quick, sharp death-blow that should end her woe instantly, than the slow, cruel torture that would as surely if not as swiftly destroy her life.

Something of this truth seemed to strike his mind. He groaned slightly. Then he began to comfort his conscience.

"I will provide for her," he said to himself. "I will buy that little estate for her. She can live there as a young widow. She can——Oh, great Heaven, what a villain I am growing to be! But I cannot help it. I cannot re-marry Drusilla because I am bound to Anna, and have been bound to her for many years. So I cannot but do as I do. I wonder if murderers can help killing, or thieves stealing? Or if really I can help being the wretch I am?" And as he mentally asked himself this question his face grew so dark with pain and remorse, that Anna, who had been watching him and who quite mistook his mood, laughed and said:

"Why, Alick, one would really think, to see you, that you take this matter to heart."

"I take the matter to heart much more than you believe, Anna," he answered, speaking, as had been his frequent manner of late, true in the letter and false in the spirit of his reply. Then lest his supposed disappointment should cause her to relent and to fix an earlier day for their marriage than would quite be convenient for him, he hastened to add: "But let it be as you will, fair cousin. I will wait with what patience I may until November."

Anna pouted, for although she was in no haste to marry, she felt affronted that Alick should yield the point so readily.

Alick stayed and dined with his uncle and cousin that day. And after dinner he would have taken leave to go home, but his uncle stopped him, saying:

"No, indeed, my boy. This is the first evening since we have been in Washington that I have had you all to myself, and I mean to have the good of you. Every other evening you have had to dance attendance on Anna to some place of amusement. There is no place to go to this evening, thank Heaven. And Anna is tired and is going to rest, so you just sit down and play a game of chess with me. Come, I will let you off at ten o'clock, but not a moment before."

So Alexander sat down to the chess-board with his uncle and played until ten o'clock; and then bade him good-night, and started for home.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HER LOVE.

Hers is the love which keeps
A constant watch-fire light,
With a flame that never sleeps
Through the longest winter night.—ELIZA COOK.

MEANWHILE, Drusilla slept long and deeply, like one much worn in mind and body. It was afternoon when she opened her eyes. She saw Pina sitting by her side.

At first, she thought it was yet early in the morning, and that she had awakened at her usual hour, and she wondered why her maid should be watching by her bed; but in another moment, memory returned and reminded her of all the events of the day. And she thought of Alexander's loving kindness to her, and she smiled with delight. Then she asked:

"Where is Mr. Lyon?"

"He is gone to town, ma'am," answered Pina.

The little lady's face fell. Its gladness was all gone in an instant.

"Gone to town again, Pina?" she repeated in a sad tone.

"Yes, ma'am, which he told me to tell you, as he was unwillin' compelled for to go, and which he would be sure to come back very early," said the girl, in her good nature, adding a little to her master's message.

"Oh! did he say that, Pina? Did he say he would come back very early? Are you sure, Pina?" And the little face brightened up again.

"Sure as sure, ma'am; which 'very early' was his very words," said Pina, telling a little white lie.

"What time is it now?"

"Near five, ma'am."

"Then he will soon be here," she said. And strengthened by this hope, she threw off the counterpane, and got out of bed.

With the help of her maid she dressed herself as care-

fully to please her husband's taste, as a maiden might to attract a lover's eyes.

Then she went down-stairs to see if the drawing-room was made comfortable for the evening. She found that Leo had done his duty in the matter. The fire in the grate was burning brightly; the hearth was shining clearly; the deep sofa was drawn up on one side of the chimney, and the easy chair on the other, and the round-table was placed between them. The front blinds were left as usual unclosed until the master's return; but the crimson curtains were drawn before the windows. The chandelier was lighted, and its rays were reflected back by the pictured walls, the gilded mirrors and the glowing draperies of the room, so that the little retreat looked very cozy and home-like.

"Yes, this is all very well; but there are no flowers," said this loving little wife; (for wife we must call her, notwithstanding Mr. Alick's discovery;) and she went into her small conservatory and cut a few fragrant tea roses and lemon geraniums, and arranged them in a beautiful group, and placed them in a vase, and set them on the round table.

And then she opened her piano and selected from her music some of her husband's favorite pieces, and laid them in readiness.

"He is so fond of music, and he likes my voice and touch, and yet he so seldom hears me sing or play now. Perhaps he will to-night, though," she said, as she sat down to try the tone of her long neglected instrument.

She had taken no food since morning, for in fact, her long sleep had kept her from feeling the want of it; and soon she felt faint from hunger, and she got up to ring the bell for a cup of tea.

But Pina, who had not forgotten her mistress's needs, was even now on her way to the drawing-room with the tea-tray.

She brought it in and sat it down on the table, and stood waiting orders.

"Did your master say he would be home to dinner, Pina?" the little lady asked.

"No, ma'am; he said 'very early' to *me*. And when Leo asked him if dinner should be prepared for him, he

said 'no,' and that he should 'be home to an early tea,'" the girl replied.

"Then, here; I will only take half a cup of that oolong and half a biscuit to keep me up till he comes, for I wish to take tea with him this evening," said the little wife, as she hastily took the bit and sup she spoke of.

"Now, take this down, Pina; and listen," she added, as she pushed away the tray. "Have a very nice tea got ready—the oolong and the imperial, mixed half and half as he likes it; and make some sweet muffins; and slice that venison tongue; and open those West India sweetmeats, especially the preserved green figs and the pineapples. Do you hear?"

"Yes, madam."

"And will you remember all?"

"Yes, madam, I will be sure to."

Pina left the room, and her mistress resumed her practising.

She went over all his favorite pieces in turn, stopping at the end of each to go to the window, and watch and listen.

But hour after hour passed by, and still he for whom she looked came not. As night deepened, her spirits sank.

"Perhaps he will not come at all," she said, with a sigh. "Something keeps him that he cannot help," she added, in excuse for him.

When the clock struck ten she could hardly keep back her tears.

"He will not be home until very late, even if he comes to-night," she said, with a deep sob, as she closed the piano and sat down by the fire.

She waited then for her servants to come as usual for orders, before bidding her good-night. Then, as they did not appear, she rang for them.

And when Pina entered, her mistress said:

"It is long past your bed-time."

"I know it, madam; but master, he gave us such a rowing for leaving you alone last night, after you had been frightened the night before, that Leo and me, we daren't go. We'll sit in the kitchen, if you please, ma'am, or wait in the hall, as your order, until the master returns."

"He may not be able to get home to-night."

"Then, please, ma'am, we'll have to sit up and watch, or sleep anywhere in the house as you'll appoint."

Drusilla reflected for a moment, and then said:

"You may sit up in the kitchen for an hour longer, and then come to me for orders.

The girl left the room, and her mistress sank back in her resting-chair, repeating to herself:

"He knows that I am ill and nervous and almost unprotected here; and he left me word he would be back early. Oh, surely he will keep his promise, in part, at least, by coming back some time to-night. He will if he can! I am sure he will, if he can!" she added, confidingly.

But as the next hour wore slowly on, her long tried courage utterly broke down, and she bowed her head upon the table and wept bitterly.

The clock was striking eleven, when two sounds from opposite ways struck her ear. One was the galloping of a horse's feet coming to the house. The other was the running of her servants up the back stairs.

Drusilla hastily wiped her eyes as Pina entered the room.

"Your master has come. Send Leo around to the stable to take his horse, and do you bring up the supper-tray," she said.

And the girl left the room to obey orders; but before going down-stairs she went and unlocked the front door, and set it slightly ajar that her master might enter at once when he should reach the house.

Drusilla meanwhile tried to still the spasmodic sobs that were yet heaving her bosom, and to force back the tears that were yet wetting her eyes, and to put on a pleasant face to meet her beloved. But it is not so easy all at once to suppress nervous excitement.

So when Alexander hurried through the hall door, locking it as he passed, and hurried into the drawing-room to see her, she was still sobbing and weeping.

He stopped short in surprise and some anger.

"Why, Drusa! why, what is all this row about?"

"Oh, Alick, Alick!" she gasped, her nerves being all unstrung, "I did not think you would have stayed away

from me to-night! I have been waiting for you so long, as I have waited for you so often! oh, so often!"

"Is that meant for a reproach, Drusilla?" he asked, coldly, as he dropped into a chair.

"Oh, no, Alick! no dear, no! but I cannot—cannot help it!"

And she cried harder than ever.

"Well, this is a pretty way to meet a man, upon my word, after he has taken a long cold ride to see you," said Mr. Lyon, angrily.

"I didn't mean it, Alick! Indeed I didn't, dear! I tried hard to help it; but I couldn't. I broke down," she cried, sobbing heavily between her words.

"Humph, this is pleasant, upon my soul," he said, grimly, watching her without making one attempt to soothe her

"I know—I know how bad it is in me to do so, Alick dear, and I'm trying to stop it; indeed I am. Bear with me a little, dear; I will stop soon, indeed I will," she sobbed.

"I hope it will be very soon. This looks very much as if you were accusing me of misusing you, Drusilla; do you mean to say that I do?"

"Oh, no, no, no, Alick! I never even thought so! You are very good to me. It is not your fault, dear; it is mine. I don't know what ails me that I cry so much at such little things. I feel like a baby that wants its mother's lap," she said, with a still heaving bosom.

"That is very childish, Drusilla," he answered, in a harsh, unsympathizing manner.

"I know it is, dear. I am sorry I am so foolish; it is because I am so, so lonely, Alick. Oh, so lonely, dear, you can't think; it is like death—like heart-break. But it is not your fault, dear; I don't mean that; don't you think that. You are not to blame, Alick; it is I. But then, dear, think of this, and bear with me a little. I have no one in the wide world but only you; and when you are away all is so still, so silent—oh, so dreary, you don't know. If I only had a mother to turn to when I feel so weak and foolish, and so lonesome—if I could only lay my head down on my mother's shoulder when you are away, and cry a little I should be better; I should be

all right when you should return home. But I have no mother to go to, Alick."

"If you had she would box your ears for such nonsense; that is, if I remember the old lady rightly," said Alexander, brutally, as he arose from his chair and walked the room.

But her nervous excitement was now subsiding. Her tears ceased to flow; her sobs were softer. Presently she wiped her eyes, and, smiling like sunshine through raindrops, she said:

"It is all over now, Alick dear, all quite over. It was only a summer gust, dear, and it did me no harm; and you will excuse it this once, Alick?"

"I shall hardly know how to do so if this exhibition is ever to be repeated," he growled.

"I hope it never will be, Alick," she said, with a subsiding sigh, as she arose and touched the bell.

"Drusilla, if you knew as much as I do you would very carefully avoid giving me any annoyance," he said, in so meaning a manner that her hand dropped from the bell-pull, and she turned to him in dismay, and, gazing on him, asked:

"What is it that you know, Alick, dear? Indeed I never wish to annoy you. But what is it you mean, dear?"

"No matter! You will know some day; all too soon whenever that day shall come," he said, evasively.

"But, Alick dear, you frighten me. Please what is it?"

"No matter what. Let the subject drop, Drusilla," he replied, repenting the cruelty that made him allude to the guilty secret of his own breast.

"But, dear Alick——" she re-commenced.

"Let the subject drop, I say," he interrupted her, in a tone so peremptory that she immediately bowed her head and obeyed.

And Pina now entered the room with the tray, and laid the cloth for supper. And having done so she retired.

When Mr. Lyon had supped to his satisfaction, and felt himself in a better humor, he turned around to the blazing fire, and said:

"I have a mind to sit up and watch to-night for that face at the window."

"Do, dear Alick, if you are not too tired," she answered.

"And I will sit with my revolver by my side."

"Yes, do; and with me also."

"But you are not able to sit up."

"Oh, yes, I am. You know I slept nearly all day. And I do wish to watch with you."

"So be it then. But we must draw the curtains back from the windows, as they were last night and all nights before. Who closed them to-night?"

"Leo did, I suppose, to keep the face from looking in and frightening me again. And I did not change the arrangement, because I reflected that you could see the light almost as well through these fine crimson curtains as glass itself."

"That is true. It is a pity you or one of your servants had not thought of this before. It would have saved you a fright."

"But, Alick, dear, if any dangerous person were lurking about the premises, is it not better that I should have detected him, even at the cost of a fright, than that he should be let go on and do the mischief he is plotting, whatever that is?"

"There is something in what you say, my brave little wi—woman," he answered.

She did not perceive how he caught and corrected his words, for she was busy drawing back the curtains of one window, while he did the like with those of the other.

Alexander went and got his small revolver from the pocket of his riding coat and laid it on the table beside him. And then they sat down to wait the issue.

At first they talked a little in low voices. Alexander would make Drusilla tell him again and again the particulars of her two frights. But she had so little to tell

"Only a white, stern face, looking in at me through the dark window."

Alexander questioned her as to the hour of its appearance.

"It was at two o'clock on the first night. And at one o'clock on the second night," she answered.

"Exactly; and if it keeps on coming an hour later each night, it will appear at twelve precisely to-night,

And it now wants just ten minutes to that time," said Alexander, with a laugh.

Then he questioned her as to her thoughts, feelings and occupations at the time she saw the face.

Drusilla replied that she was reading, and confessed that she was thinking of supernatural beings and feeling a little afraid of looking over her shoulder.

"Precisely; and now let me ask you *what* were you reading?"

"I had been reading 'The Night Side of Nature,'" replied Drusilla.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Alexander, "the secret is out. The face at the window was an optical illusion created by your over-excited imagination. Next time, my little love, read Scott's 'Demonology.' It will be a perfect antidote to the 'Night Side of Nature.' I don't wonder, poor child! that you were afraid to look over your shoulder, or that you saw faces glaring at you through dark windows. I wonder you didn't see a spectral face grinning through every single pane of glass. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" echoed another voice—a strange, harsh, unearthly voice.

Alexander started and looked at his companion, who was pale as death.

"*Ha! ha! ha!*" shouted the voice again.

He then seized his revolver and turned quickly to the window whence the voice seemed to come.

"HA! HA! HA!" it shrieked a third time, as Alexander caught a glimpse of a ghastly, grinning face that showed itself for an instant at the window, and he levelled his pistol. But as he fired it, it dropped and disappeared.

"Stay here while I search the grounds," whispered Mr. Lyon to his panic-stricken companion.

And revolver still in hand, he ran out of the house.

Drusilla sat with her hands clasped tightly together, her face white as a sheet and her heart half paralyzed with fright. She had not long to wait. A pistol shot, followed by another and another in quick succession, startled her. With a wild cry she sprang to her feet and rushed out to the help of her husband.

CHAPTER XXX.

BREAKING.

They'd met e'er yet the world had come
To wither up the springs of truth;
Amid the holy joys of home,
And in the first warm flush of youth.

They parted, not as lovers part,
With earnest vows of constancy—
She with her wronged and bleeding heart,
And he rejoicing to be free!—ANONYMOUS.

"ALICK! Alick! Oh, Alick, where are you? Answer me! Speak to me, if you can! Oh, give me some sign where to search for you," Drusilla cried, running wildly out into the wintry night, in the direction from which she had heard the shots, and fearing at every point to find her husband dead or wounded.

"Hush!" whispered a voice through the darkness. And the next moment her husband stood by her side.

"Oh, Alick, thank Heaven you are alive and safe! You *are* safe, are you not, dear?" she eagerly inquired.

"Yes; but that infernal villain has got off!"

"Oh, never mind, so that you are not hurt. You are *not* hurt, are you, Alick?"

"No; I have not been in any danger; but that cursed caitiff! he has escaped!"

"Oh dear, let him go; so you are sure you are not wounded? You *are* sure, are you not, dear? You are quite sure neither of those shots struck you?"

"The shots were fired by my own hand, and I'm only sorry they missed their mark, and that diabolical scoundrel got off! He ran like a quarter horse, Devil fly away with him! I would have given a thousand dollars to have him here with my foot on his neck! By all I hold sacred, I would!"

"Oh Alick, do stop thinking about him, and think about yourself! You are so excited I don't believe you

know whether you are wounded or not; you may be bleeding to death now, somewhere under your coat! Oh Alick, dear, come in the house and let me look."

"It is you who are excited, little goose. You are shaking like an ague! Come in the house yourself, and get warm and quiet," he said, tucking her under his arm and leading her towards the cottage.

"But Alick, dear, tell me, are you *very* certain——"

"No, I'm not '*very*' certain; I'm only just *certain* that I have not a single scratch. That—that—miserable miscreant was unarmed, I suppose, Satan burn him!"

"Who was he, Alick do you know?"

"How should I? I only know that he was some felon spy, who has doubtless been hanging about the house, and peeping through the windows o' nights."

"A spy, Alick? Only a spy? Why I thought he was a robber and a murderer."

"My little love, a spy is the most dangerous character of the three. We may defend ourselves against robbers and murderers; but not against spies. The first are beasts of prey; but the last are venomous serpents—snakes in the grass. No one knows how long that infamous wretch has been lurking around our house, or how often he has been peeping in at our windows, or how much he has seen."

"Dear Alick, we have only seen *him* three times."

"But he may have seen us, three hundred times. Of course our eyes were not always on the window."

"That is true; but, after all, what of it, Alick? He could not harm us by looking at us," said the honest young creature, who knew she had nothing to hide.

"Ugh! if I had him under my feet, I would not leave a whole bone in his body!" cried the double-dealing man, who was conscious that he had a great deal to conceal.

"Well, never mind, Alick, dear. For my part I am well content that the man got off, and you have no broken bones to account for. For, after all, he committed no great crime in looking in at a lighted window at night. Why, Alick, in walking through the streets of the city in the evening you and I used to do the same thing, only for the harmless pleasure of looking in to an interior,

upon a pretty domestic picture of a family circle around their tea-table, or something of the sort. And this man might have had no worse purpose."

"His purpose, whatever it might have been, should have cost him his life if I had caught him!" said Mr. Lyon, grimly.

"Then I am truly glad you did not catch him. Oh, be content, Alick, for you may be sure, now that the man has been seen and chased, he will never come to trouble us again!"

"I don't know that he will. But he didn't seem to dread being seen, however. It was his taunting laugh, you know, that drew my notice to him. He seemed to try to catch my eye by mocking my laugh. I think he had seen all he wished to see, and that this was to be his last visit; so he let his presence be known, to annoy us. Ah! if I ever find out who he is, he shall pay dearly for his frolic!" exclaimed Alick.

By this time they reached the house and entered it.

Alexander made Drusilla sit down in the easy-chair before the fire, and then he went and carefully closed and fastened the doors and windows, and finally came and took a seat by her side.

And they sat there a little while to warm and rest themselves before going up-stairs to bed.

"Alick," said Drusilla, "I hope if you ever do find out who that man is, you will do him no harm."

"I will be his death," exclaimed Alexander, grinding his teeth.

"No, no, no; he may have been some poor forlorn creature, who having no home of his own, looked in upon ours, as upon a paradise."

"He was, more likely, some vulgar wretch, who in prowling about here at night, after game, has found out that a very pretty little woman lives here, often all alone, and has made up his mind to get as many peeps at her as he can."

"Oh, Alick!"

"That is the secret, now I come to think quietly over the matter, my dear; and your brilliantly lighted windows were the beacons that first drew him here to gaze on you at will; to feast his eyes on your beauty; perhaps to

fall in love with you! Come, what do you think of it all now?" inquired Mr. Lyon, maliciously.

"Oh, Alick, Alick, don't talk so to me. I am your wife. Such thoughts——" She paused, and blushing deeply, turned away her head.

"What is the matter, little love?" he laughed.

"You should not breathe such thoughts to me, dear Alick. But—I shall draw the curtains before the windows every evening in future."

"I think it would be just as well you should do so. The light shining through their crimson folds will be enough to guide me home at night," he said, as he arose and lighted the bedroom candles.

She set the guard up before the grate, and put out the lamps.

They left the drawing-room and went up-stairs together; but when they reached their chamber door, he put one of the candles in her hand, saying kindly:

"Good night, my dear child. I hope you will have a good sleep."

And before she could answer, he opened the door of an opposite chamber, passed in and locked it behind him, leaving her standing still in astonishment.

This was the first time, while at home, that he had ever slept out of their mutual room. She could not imagine why he should do so now. If he had not spoken so kindly to her, she might have supposed he was angry with her. But his good-night had been even unusually gentle and tender; it had seemed almost plaintive and deprecating. But then he had not only passed their chamber and gone into another room, but he had locked the door behind him, thus securing himself against possible intrusion. Whose intrusion? she asked herself—hers, his wife's? Well, she was his wife, she thought; but dearly as she loved him, scarcely living, except by his side, she would never intrude upon his chosen solitude.

She stood there in perplexed and painful thought, inquiring and wondering why he left her and locked her out. Perhaps, after all, she said to herself, he was still a little angry with her, for having cried so much that evening. She must find out. She could not go to rest, she would never be able to sleep without knowing whether he was

really displeased with her, and reconciling him to herself. She would not intrude upon him, she thought, no, never! But she would rap at his door and ask if she had offended him, and if so, she would do all that she could to atone for such offence. For she must make friends with him before she left the spot, or—die!

So she went and wrapped at his door and then waited.

She heard him moving about the room, but he made no response.

She thought he had not heard her, so she rapped again.

"Well! Who is there?" he inquired from within.

"It is I, your little Drusa, Alick," she answered, in a low and tremulous tone.

"What do you want, Drusilla?"

"Oh, Alick dear, my heart is breaking; please don't be mad with me," she pleaded, in her most plaintive voice.

"I am not mad with you, child; why should you think so?"

"Oh, Alick, I thought—I thought you were displeased because—because—" She could not go on.

"What reason could I have for being angry with you, child?" he asked again, putting his question in a form that he thought she could more easily answer.

"Why, my crying so much this evening," she said.

"Oh, bosh! that is all over now. No, little Drusa, I have no cause, no just cause of complaint against you. If I am ever angry with you, it is from my own quick temper and by no fault of yours, my child. Now go to bed like a good girl, or rather like a sweet little saint as you truly are. Good night, my little Drusa," he said.

"Good night, dear Alick," she answered, turning sadly away.

She went to her own room and set the candle on the mantelpiece, sank into her easy-chair, and lapsed into sorrowful thought.

"He said he was not angry with me; yes, he said so; but he never told me why he left my room, and he never even opened the door to speak to me, nor yet kissed me good-night. No, he is not angry with me; not angry, but sick and tired of me, as I might have known he would be; for what am I to please him who has been used to ladies of the highest rank and culture? Yes, he is sick and

tired of me, and it is not his fault—it is mine; and I wish, oh, I wish, it were no sin to die!"

And she dropped her head upon the arm of her chair and wept bitterly; wept till she was so exhausted that she slipped from the chair to the carpet, and, groveling there, wept on.

Her tears like her grief, seemed inexhaustible; for, when the daylight dawned and the sun rose, she was still lying where she had sunk overcome with sorrow.

At length when the morning was well advanced, she remembered her housewifely duties, and slowly got up and rang the bell for her maid.

Then, lest her evening dress should excite the girl's curiosity, as it did on a former occasion, she quickly took it off and threw around her a chamber wrapper.

Pina came in and put fresh logs on the fire, and filled the ewers, and laid out clean towels, and then stood waiting.

"There is nothing more, Pina; you may go," said her mistress.

And the maid left the room.

Drusilla bathed her eyes and face, and combed her hair, and dressed herself as tastefully as if she had slept through a happy night and waked to a gladsome morning.

And she went down-stairs to see to the breakfast. The cozy drawing-room, the bright fire, the clean hearth, the neat table, all the accessories of her sweet home, and, above all, the clear sunshiny morning, early harbinger of spring, cheered her spirits and inspired more hopeful thoughts than had been hers on the evening previous.

"Alick loved me from my childhood," she said, "and chose me freely for his wife from all others that he might have had. And he is very good to me. He spoke gently to me even last night. Perhaps he is not so weary of me as I think. Perhaps he loves me still. And my doubts come only from my own fancies. Oh, Heaven grant that it may be so. I will see how he will meet me this morning. But, oh! if I should be so keen to note every word and look that he gives me, or don't give me, how ill I should requite his love. Shall I turn jealous fool, and watch my Alick as if he were a foe to be suspected, and not my dear husband to be loved and trusted to the last?

No, Alick, dear, no; I will do you no such wrong. I know I'm a big little fool, but not such a one as that, either. What if he did leave me last night. Perhaps he needed to be very quiet, after so much excitement as he has had these two nights. I am sure, I am so nervous sometimes that I cannot bear a movement or a ray of light in my room, and why should he not be subject to the same moods, even if he is a strong man? Come, I will trust my husband, as well as love him."

This reaction of feeling, brought about mostly by the blessed sunshine of morning and the benign influence of home, called back the color to the young wife's cheeks and the light to her eyes.

Alexander came down earlier than usual. And she arose from her seat to receive his morning kiss.

But she did not get it. He passed her, and dropped into his chair, and said:

"Ring for breakfast, Drusa. I must get off to town sooner by an hour this morning."

With a suppressed sigh, she pulled the bell; and when Pina appeared, she ordered breakfast to be served immediately.

Alexander was thoughtful even to gloom. He had to break to Drusilla the news of his intended sudden departure. And he dreaded to do it, and he did not know how to begin.

The morning meal was served. They sat down to the table. Drusilla poured out the coffee, and, in handing her husband his cup, she said:

"You are not feeling well this morning, Alick, dear?"

"No, Drusa, I am not well, in spirits at least. I have a very painful duty before me, little Drusa," he answered catching at this opening for his discourse.

"I am very sorry, Alick," she replied, and then waited, for his further speech.

"I shall be obliged to leave home for a short time. I did not like to tell you last night, lest it should disturb your rest," he said, little knowing how utterly his desertion had deprived her of that rest.

"Oh, Alick, dear, must you really go?"

"I must really go, Drusilla. That business connected with my father's will obliges me to do so," he gravely said

"Shall you take me with you, Alick?" she asked, in a low timid voice.

"No, Drusa; of course not. If I could take you along I should not feel so badly about going," he answered.

"Oh, Alick, I am so sorry, dear."

"I shall not stay very long, Drusa. I shall come back to you as soon as I possibly can, my child."

"I know you will, Alick. Where do you go?"

"Into Virginia, of course, where our estates lie."

"Oh, what a troublesome business that is connected with your father's will, to be sure—to bother you so much as it has ever since we have been married. Why cannot lawyers make wills so clear that there can be no mistake about their meaning?"

"Ah, why indeed?" repeated Mr. Lyon, laughing in spite of his secret self-reproach.

"When do you start, dear Alick?"

"To-morrow morning, my child."

"So soon! Oh, that is very sudden!"

"These matters admit of no delay, Drusa. Now, my little woman, don't look so downcast. It is unpleasant enough for me to have to leave you. Don't add to my vexation by your looks."

"No, Alick, I will not if I can help it. You will want your clothes got ready," she added, cheerfully, "and the time is short. Tell me at once, please, what you would like to take with you, and I will pack them up to-day."

"Oh, a dozen of each sort of under-garment; one morning and one evening suit; my dressing-case and writing-case; those are all, I think. Have them put into the little black Russia leather trunk."

"I will pack them myself, Alick dear, and then they will be sure to be done right."

"As you please, little woman."

"How long shall you be gone, Alick? Can you tell me that?"

"Oh, not exactly. The length of my absence depends upon circumstances. Not more than a week or ten days at most."

"At least you will be sure to be back within the fortnight?"

"Yes, certainly. But you know we can talk over all

this to-night, when I get back from town. I shall certainly be home to tea," said Mr. Lyon, as he arose from the table.

"Then I shall hope to see you. And I know you will come if you *can*, Alick," she answered, as she thought of her constant disappointments in this respect.

He understood her, and he answered, as he drew on his riding-coat:

"I *can* be back this last evening, and I *will*. Good-by until I see you again, little Drusa."

And he put on his hat and hurried out of the house, pulling on his gloves as he passed.

And the next moment he mounted this horse and galloped away.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FIRST ABSENCE.

I heard thy light, careless farewell, love,
And patiently saw thee depart—
Ay, patiently. But could words tell, love,
The sorrow that swelled in my heart?
Yet tearless and still though I stood, love,
Thy last words are thrilling me yet,
And my lips would now breathe if they could, love,
The deep prayer!—"Oh do not forget."—ANON.

DRUSILLA went to her own room, wept a little, and blamed herself for that weakness, and then she called her maid to help her, and she spent the whole day in preparing her husband's wardrobe for his journey.

It happened for once that Mr. Lyon could keep his word to his wife without much personal inconvenience, and so he kept it.

When he reached the city that day he made a morning call upon his uncle and his cousin. He found the General was engaged to dine that evening with a veteran brother officer, and Miss Lyon would be occupied with the preparations for her journey, so that neither the old gentleman nor the young lady would be at liberty to entertain him longer than the morning.

After lunching with his relatives, and arranging to join them at nine the next morning, he bade them good day.

He went to his own hotel where he called for his bill, settled it in full, gave up the keys of his rooms, and so closed his connection with the house.

From the hotel he went to the livery stable, mounted his horse and rode homeward.

He reached Cedarwood at seven o'clock. He found his trunk ready packed, corded and labeled for his journey, and standing in the hall. He found the drawing-room as cozy and inviting as his wife always made it for his reception; the fire burning brightly, and the tea-table standing before it spread with all the dainties he most liked; and, above all, he found *her*, pretty, well-dressed, and cheerful as she could command herself to be.

This was the first time for many weeks that he had taken tea with his wife, and she made it a festive occasion. He began again to realize that he loved her; he felt like pressing her to his heart as in the first days of their marriage, before the witchery of the world came between them, or he had discovered what he supposed to be the illegality of their marriage. Yes, he would have liked to have shown her these proofs of reviving affection; but he did not. He had decided, in the secrecy of his own insane mind, that she was henceforth to be only as a sister to him until he should be able to part with her entirely; and so he treated her now very gently but very coldly.

After tea, which he took care should be prolonged as far into the evening as possible, he asked her to sing and play for him.

And she very gladly sat down to the piano, and executed some of his favorite pieces in her very best style.

He purposely kept her there playing piece after piece, until she was really wearied.

And then when she rose from the instrument he took the lead in the conversation, and would talk of nothing but music, musicians, and composers until the clock struck eleven. Then he suddenly said:

"My little girl it is late, and you are tired; go to bed at once. I have letters to write that will detain me an hour or so. When I have finished them I will come up"

"Alick, dear, letters to write so late to-night when you have to start so early to-morrow?"

"Yes, little Drusa.

"Why didn't you write them earlier in the evening, then?"

"Because I wanted to enjoy every moment of your company while you sat up, Drusa, and I knew I could write them after you had retired," he artfully replied.

"But I had rather not leave you at all this last evening, Alick. I will sit very quietly near you and not interrupt you the least while you write your letters."

"But I will not permit you to do so, Drusa. You are pale with want of rest even now; and you will make a point of getting up to-morrow morning even sooner than I shall—I know you will."

"I must, Alick dear, to see that you have a good breakfast ready in time to eat it leisurely before you go."

"Just so; therefore you must go to rest now. There, be a good girl, and clear out, will you?"

"Yes, Alick," she answered, in a depressed tone. "Good-night;" and she put up her lips to kiss him.

"Bosh! no good-night in the case. Do you think I am going to sit up till day writing letters?" he said, laughing and evading her caress.

Feeling that something was very wrong, yet trying not to think so, she left the room and went up-stairs to bed.

And after a little while, being almost worn out by so many nights' watching, she fell asleep and slept until morning.

Meanwhile, Alexander wrote a couple of trifling letters, and then, not to disturb her, he stole on tip-toes up to his newly chosen room and went to rest.

Drusilla was the first up in the morning, before even her servants were astir. She roused Pina and set her to work, and helped with her own hands, and to such good purpose that a very nice breakfast was soon ready and waiting for Alexander.

He came down, and greeted Drusilla kindly, but without his usual morning kiss. And she felt the slight; but neither spoke nor looked her chagrin.

"You were so still that I thought you were asleep when I went up-stairs last night, so I took care not to wake you by entering your room; for you needed rest very much, little Drusa," he said, in explanation of his second desertion.

"Yes, Alick," she answered, quietly; and she went on to make his coffee.

When breakfast was over there, came a hurried leave-taking.

Alexander pulled on his riding-coat in great haste; drew on his gloves and then looked at Drusilla.

"Well," he muttered to himself, "she is henceforth only like my sister; but I should embrace my sister before leaving her to go on a journey."

"What are you saying, Alick dear?" inquired Drusilla, who caught the sound, but not the import of his words.

"Nothing. Good-by, my little Drusa, my darling little Drusa," he said, folding her to his bosom and kissing her as no man ever kissed his sister yet, and as he had not kissed *her* for many weeks.

"You do love me then, after all, don't you, Alick?" she said, in delight.

"Love you! I think I do, little darling! But now I must tear myself from you, Drusa. You will find in my glass drawer a roll of bank-notes amounting to between five and six hundred dollars, for your use while I am gone."

"Oh, Alick, I shall never want the tenth part in so short a time as a fortnight; and you are to be home in a fortnight, are you not, Alick?"

"Yes, yes, surely. Now then, good-by!" he hastily exclaimed, giving her another tight hug and long kiss.

"You will write soon, Alick?" she said, following him to the front door.

"Very soon."

"But I shall want to write to you every day, beginning this evening. Where shall I direct the first letter, Alick?"

"To the post-office at Richmond."

"Then you will find one from me in Richmond the day after you get there."

"Yes, yes, my darling! Thank you, pet! Good-by! Good-by! I have not an instant to lose," he hurriedly exclaimed, wringing her hand and jumping into the carriage, upon which his luggage was already placed.

Leo, who was in the driver's seat, cracked his whip and started his horses.

Drusilla watched the carriage out of sight, and then turned sadly and went into the house.

Alexander drove rapidly to the town, and first to a hack stand, where he had his luggage taken and put upon a hack. Then he sent Leo back to Cedarwood with his carriage, and he himself got into the hack and drove to his uncle's hotel, where he found the old gentleman impatiently waiting for him.

And in an hour the whole family party had started on their voyage, and were steaming down the Potomac on their way to Richmond, where early the next morning they arrived safely.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BRIGHT HOPES.

One precious pearl in sorrow's cup
Unmelted at the bottom lay,
To shine again, when all drunk up
The bitterness should pass away.

And that was hope, a fair sweet hope;
And oh, it woke such happy dreams,
And gave her soul such tempting scope
For all its dearest, fondest schemes.—MOORE.

THE loving little wife, the zealous little housekeeper, did not sit down in idleness and repining while her husband was absent. Occupation was always her great resource against melancholy.

She was, besides, too much in sympathy with all nature not to feel the influence of the vitalizing spring season, with the reviving world around her.

The sun was shining with a more genial splendor, the air was soft and warm; the ground was quickening with the springing grass and the trees with the rising sap and budding leaves. Birds were building their nests. All things inspired thoughts of renovation.

Little Drusilla resolved to refresh her pretty wild-wood home with a spring cleaning, so that it might possess new attractions for its truant master, when he should please to return.

Not that her house required this—for it was already as

clean and sweet as it was possible for any dwelling to be; and the process to which she subjected it was but the washing of what was already pure, and the polishing of what was already bright. But it was her maxim, as it had been her mother's before her, that things should not be permitted to become soiled before they were cleaned; but that they should be kept clean.

In the course of this work Drusilla opened the drawer of the looking-glass in Alexander's dressing-room, and while putting its contents in order she found that little piece of paper which had produced so strange an effect upon his feelings and actions. Thinking it to be only some little receipt, or memorandum, she opened it and read it.

Its effect upon her was very different from what it had been upon her husband. As she gathered its meaning her face softened with a sweet and tender smile, and she sat down in a chair to contemplate it at more leisure.

"I never saw this before; or any other of the sort. How it brings back that day! that happy wedding-day! the happiest of my life! Dear Alick! dear, dear Alick, how blest you made me that day, in making me your own forever! forever and ever, my love! My joy seemed too much for earth, too much to be real. Even now, even now, I can scarcely realize how happy I am and ought to be! Oh, my love! my love! I hope I may never give you an uneasy moment as long as I live in this world! that I may never cease to please and serve you all my days! Dear little token!" she said, fondly gazing on that fatal piece of paper—"I will keep you for his sake. When I am sad and lonely I will look at you. I will cherish you like my wedding-ring."

And she went directly and made a little silk bag, put the paper in it, attached it to a ribbon, hung it round her neck and hid it in her bosom.

Then smilingly she resumed her work.

When she considered the house thoroughly cleansed and worthy of its summer hangings, she told Pina that crimson satin curtains should not be put up again until autumn.

And she ordered Leo to put the horses into the carriage to take her to town.

This was the first occasion upon which she had left home for many weeks. And she went now upon a shopping expedition, to purchase white lace curtains for her windows, and white linen to make summer covers for her crimson satin chair and sofa cushions.

She spent the whole forenoon in making her selections; and then, feeling tired and hungry, she drove to a "Ladies' Tea Room," where she had once been with Alexander.

She entered and sat down at one of the little tables and asked for a cup of chocolate and some seed cakes, which were soon brought.

While she ate and drank she looked about her with the curiosity natural to one who had lately led so secluded a life. The room was half full of customers. At some of the tables small family parties of parents and children were gathered. At others ladies and gentlemen were seated. And at the table exactly opposite to her own there were two officers and two young women who were dining and drinking wine, laughing and talking, and conducting themselves generally in a manner not agreeable to quiet and well-disposed people.

Drusilla glanced at this noisy party but once, and recognized the officers as the same who had intruded into her box on the night she went to hear the German opera troupe. Chiefly because the party were so ill-behaved, she was afraid to look towards them again. So she drew her veil around between the side of her face and her obnoxious neighbors, and she looked down into her plate.

Natural as this action was, it caught the attention of the officers; and, innocent as it was, it gave umbrage to their female companions.

"She sees that we recognize her," said one of the men.

And a low, derisive laugh came from one of the women.

Very much abashed, and also a little alarmed, Drusilla left her luncheon half consumed and went to the counter to pay her bill.

But one of the officers got up and followed her, and, as she turned to leave the room, he placed himself before her, and, lifting his hat, said:

"How do you do, Miss?"

Drusilla bowed in silence, and attempted to pass on.

"Excuse me, but when did you reach town?"

"I beg your pardon, sir; I have not the honor of your acquaintance," said Drusilla, coldly, passing him by and quickly leaving the house.

But he followed her out on the sidewalk, and joining her, said:

"You 'have not the honor of my acquaintance,' eh? Well, the 'honor' is questionable, but the acquaintance is beyond a doubt my dear! What! don't you remember the night I came into the box, to chaff my friend Lyon on his pretty little acquisition, eh? By the way, how is Lyon?"

By this time Drusilla had beckoned her servant, who drove up with the carriage, dismounted, opened the door, and let down the steps for his mistress.

"But you didn't tell me how my friend Lyon is. I hope he is well. I know he has left his rooms at the hotel. But if you will favor me with your address, Miss——"

"Leo," said Drusilla to her coachman, as she entered her carriage, "this person annoys me. If you see a policeman give him in charge, and—drive on."

"Yes, madam," answered the man, heartily, cracking his whip and starting his horses.

But the animals were not fresh, and they had not been fed or watered since morning. So they did not move with their usual spirit. And Drusilla had not gone far up Seventh street road, on her way home, before she perceived that she was followed by a hack that was gaining upon her every moment.

At first she supposed this following to be accidental; but when the hack driving rapidly, caught up to her and might have passed her, yet did not; but, on the contrary, slackened its pace and kept just behind her; she suspected that there was something more than accident in the matter.

And her suspicions were confirmed when she heard loud laughing and talking in the hack, and recognized the voices of the disreputable party who had insulted her in the tea room.

She quickly let down the little window in front of her own carriage, and spoke to her coachman:

"Leo—drive fast."

"Yes, ma'am, which it is necessary so to do."

"Who are those people behind, Leo?" she breathlessly inquired

"A intoxified set, ma'am, which is unbeknown to me; being always too well conducted to be acquainted with sich, which I think one of um is the person you complained of, ma'am."

"Yes! go on quickly, for Heaven's sake, Leo: let us leave them behind as soon as possible," hastily urged Drusilla.

And the young coachman put his jaded horses to their utmost speed.

But the horses in the hack were the fresher of the two sets, and they kept well up behind her carriage until they reached the gate of the private road leading through Cedarwood.

Here Leo drew up his carriage, left his seat, opened the gate, propped it back, and took the reins to lead his horses through.

They had but just cleared the gate, when Drusilla put her head from the window and said, hastily:

"Leo, stop just where you are! stop the way! Those persons are preparing to follow us in. Tell them that they cannot be permitted to do so; that this is a very private road leading to my own house, and no farther."

At the first word Leo had stopped the carriage, thus barring the way, and now he turned and spoke to the man who was the ringleader of the party, and who had now left his seat and was mounted beside the driver on the box.

"If you please, sir, this road leads to my mist'ess's house and no farther on," he said.

"Oh, we know where it leads! We are going to make a call there!" laughed the man.

"Leo, Leo, do not let them pass, whatever you do," breathlessly whispered Drusilla.

"But, sir, if you please, my mist'ess don't receive no strangers," expostulated the servant.

"Oh, we are not strangers! We know her very well. And we know Lyon, too! Come, clear the way, my man and let us pass."

"But, sir, my mist'ess don't see no visitors of no sort, neither strangers nor likewise acquaintances," urged Leo.

"But she'll see us!" laughed the man on the box. And his laugh was loudly echoed by his companions inside the hack.

During this controversy Drusilla had sat back in her seat, keeping as much out of sight as possible, and only leaning forward when obliged to speak to her servant.

And Leo had been artfully manœuvering his horses, with a purpose that the party behind were too much confused by intoxication to detect.

"Come, my man, get out of the way, will you?"

"Yes, sir, immediate!" answered Leo.

And he suddenly wheeled round the carriage, clanged to the gate, and secured it in the face of the baffled pursuers.

Then with a loud derisive laugh, the boy sprang up into his seat and drove off through the woods towards home.

The discomfited party in the hack sent after him a volley of oaths, that he continued to hear until distance made them inaudible.

Whey they reached Cedarwood, Drusilla got out of her carriage more dead than alive.

Pina met her and supported her into the house, while Leo gave a hasty account of their adventure.

"Try to compose yourself, ma'am. Lor! I wouldn't let myself be upset by them rubbish!" said Pina as she held a glass of water to her mistress's lips.

"Who were they, Leo, and why did they pursue me?" inquired Drusilla, when she was somewhat restored.

"Please, ma'am, I don't know who they were, not being beknown to sich. But they were all intoxified, the whole lot of 'em."

"But why did they pursue me?"

"Well, ma'am, they was on a lark, and seen you was afeard of 'em."

"There was more in it than that, Leo! Do you think they can get through the gate?"

"No, ma'am; I locked it."

"But they can get out of the carriage and climb over it."

"No, ma'am, they're too tipsy. They can hardly sit in their seats. The driver is the onliest sober one in the lot, and he'll take them away, you may be sure, ma'am."

"Oh, what a horrible, what a revolting set! Oh, that such creatures should live in this world!" exclaimed Drusilla, with a shudder. And she seemed to have forgotten all her pretty, new purchases in which she had been so much interested.

But neither of her young servants had done so. And Pina, in haste to bring the treasures in that she might have a sight at them, and Leo in a hurry to get rid of them, that he might take his horses round to the stable, went out together.

Pina returned with her arms full of parcels.

And soon Drusilla, who had laid off her bonnet, lost sight of her late disagreeable adventure, in the pleasing occupation of displaying her beautiful lace curtains to the admiring eyes of her handmaid.

For the next few days, mistress and maid were agreeably employed in making up the curtains, and in cutting and fitting the white linen chair covers.

And by Saturday evening the curtains were put up, and the chair covers put on, and the summer decoration of the pretty wild-wood home was complete.

This brought the end of the first week of Alexander's absence. Drusilla was counting the days, and she knew that if he should keep his word, he would be home by the end of another week.

She had written to him every evening, and sent the letter to the city post-office every morning by Leo, who was also instructed to inquire for letters for her. But as yet she had had but one from Alick, and that one only announced his safe arrival at Richmond, and acknowledged the receipt of her first note. Since that she had not heard from him. But she said to herself that he was very much engaged, and could not be expected to write to her more than once or twice a week. And so she comforted her longing heart.

In the two weeks of Alexander's absence, Drusilla's health improved very much. The reasons were obvious.

"In the first place, the very tender leave he had taken of her had revived her fainting faith in his love, while the

positive promise he had made her to return within the fortnight had given her something certain to anticipate.

In the second she no longer sat up night after night, watching, waiting and weeping, in fatigue, suspense, and even terror, that wore her nerves and wasted her strength and tried her temper. She went to bed early, slept soundly, and rose refreshed.

And in the third, she had made a discovery that filled her soul with joy. She knew now, for it was evident, even to her ignorance and inexperience, that she was to be blessed with the crowning blessing of woman's life, maternity.

Once again, on the Monday of the second week of her husband's absence, she made a shopping expedition into the city. And on this occasion she shut up the house and took both her servants along—Leo to drive the carriage and Pina to sit inside with her. She took a luncheon basket too, that she might not be obliged to go into a refreshment room at the risk of meeting her disagreeable acquaintances—although reason assured her that there was not one chance in a thousand of her seeing them under the same circumstances again.

This time Drusilla bought a quantity of fine flannel, linen, cambric, muslin and lace, and also flaxen and silken floss and Berlin wool for embroideries.

And Pina, who had guessed the sweet domestic mystery long before her child-like mistress had suspected it, was as much interested in the purchase as their owner could be. Drusilla returned home without any unpleasant adventure. And the next day she commenced her delightful task. And seated in her pleasant chamber, surrounded by her pretty working materials, devising dainty little garments, and anticipating the joys in store for her, she felt happy

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A SURPRISE.

One struggle more and I am free
From pangs that rend my heart in twain;
One long last sigh to love and thee.
Then back to busy life again.—BYRON.

DRUSILLA received no second letter from Alexander. On the day after his arrival in Richmond, he received and answered her first one. Then he went with his uncle and cousin down to Old Lyon Hall, where he lived very quietly with them for about ten days, all the party resting from their fashionable Washington campaign.

At the end of that time, in order to keep the letter of his promise to Drusilla, he pleaded urgent business, and went up to Richmond, "for a day or two," as he said.

On reaching that city, he hurried to the post-office, where he found nearly a dozen letters from Cedarwood awaiting him. He did not stop to answer them; but took the first train to Washington, and arrived in the capital the same afternoon.

There was plenty of time for him to have gone out to Cedarwood that evening. But, true to his plan of never sleeping under the same roof with Drusilla again, if he could help it, he stayed at one of the city hotels all night.

In the morning, however, he hired a horse from a livery stable and set out to visit his home.

That day Drusilla had also risen very early, saying to herself:

"This is the last day of the fortnight, and Alick will be home to-night. That is to say, if nothing happens to prevent him—and surely there is nothing likely to happen—he will keep his pledged word with me and return to-night."

And so she busied herself with affectionate preparations for his arrival.

There was nothing at all else that she could do to add to the attractions of the lovely home she had renovated and decorated for his comfort and pleasure. But there

were certain dainty dishes that always delighted his epicurean taste; and these she had carefully prepared for him.

When they were ready, she went up to her chamber and sat down to the lilliputian dressmaking that was now the sweetest task in the world to her.

It was still early in the forenoon, being only ten o'clock, and she was intently engaged upon a miniature embroidered robe, when she heard the sound of horse's feet approaching the house.

Not expecting that Alexander would return at this unusual hour of the day, or in this manner, and supposing that the noise arose from Leo exercising one of the horses from the stable, she paid no attention to the matter.

But the next moment she heard the sound of a man's footsteps on the stairs, and the instant after the door was thrown open and Alexander entered the room.

With a cry of joy, she sprang up to meet him and fell upon his bosom.

"Why are you so glad to see me as all this comes to, my little Drusa?" he asked, remorsefully.

She could not answer him. In her excess of feeling, she could not speak. But if he had come back from an absence of two years instead of two weeks, her delight and excitement could not have been greater.

He kissed and embraced her very fondly—"as I should if she were my sister," perhaps he said to himself. And then with gentle force he put her back in her chair, and seated himself in another one near her, and put his arm around her.

"Oh, Alick dear, I'm so glad—so glad to see you!" she cried, as soon as she recovered her voice.

"So am I to see you, little darling, especially when I see you looking so well. How pretty you are; how much you have improved!" he said, running his fingers through her glossy tresses, and gazing admiringly upon her bright face, with its flushed cheeks, parted lips, and eyes sparkling through tears of joy.

"Oh, Alick, I am so happy to have you back again!" she eagerly repeated.

"And yet it is very plain that you haven't moped during my absence; have you now, little one?"

"Oh, no indeed, Alick; I have been so cheerfully busy fixing up the place against you should come. The house looks so fresh and pretty in its spring dress, Alick dear, I am sure you will enjoy it."

"Not fresher or prettier than the house's mistress and I'm sure I shall like both," he said.

"Shall you, Alick? Are you sure that I shall be able to please you?"

"It will be my fault if you are not."

"Now that the winter is over and the summer at hand, it will be pleasanter here in the country, Alick. And the grounds, around this little place can be made very beautiful. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, little Drusa. And I intend to spare neither trouble nor expense in making this little estate a paradise for my peri. An ideal spot it shall be; everything shall be arranged according to your taste. The woods, since you love them, shall environ the ornamented grounds.

"Oh, Alick, dear! how good you are to me! But don't sacrifice utility to beauty for my sake, Alick."

"Ah, Drusa! I would sacrifice a much greater thing for your sake," he said, with a very deep sigh.

She looked up at him suddenly.

"You are well, Alick? quite well, I hope?" were the next words she addressed to him, as she gazed anxiously in his careworn face.

"Not very well, little Drusa," he answered.

And ah! who could be well with an evil conscience!

"It is—nothing serious, dear Alick?" she inquired, growing pale with fear for his health.

"No, little goose! only spring languor and the fatigue of my journey," he answered, with a laugh that reassured her.

"Oh; and perhaps you have not had breakfast," she exclaimed, hastily rising.

"Yes, yes, I have," he said gaily, pushing her back in her seat. "I had breakfast two hours ago. I don't want that, nor do I want lunch yet, so you need give yourself no trouble about me for a while."

"But would you like to go to your dressing-room? All is ready for you there."

"I'll warrant; but I made my toilet where I got my breakfast, so I need not leave you even for that purpose"

"Your luggage, Alick, have they brought it up?"

"I have no luggage; I came out on horseback."

"Oh, was that your horse I heard?" she inquired in surprise.

"Yes; didn't you know it?"

"No; I thought you came in a cab."

"I preferred the saddle."

"But—how about your luggage, Alick dear? Shall I call Leo and order him to take the carriage and go after it! Where did you leave it? At the hotel where you breakfasted?"

"Oh, you inquisitive little imp! Sit down and be quiet while I tell you. I brought very little luggage to Washington, and that I left, as you surmise, at the hotel where I breakfasted.'

"Then let me send Leo for it. He can go and return in two hours," she said, again starting up.

"What a little fidget you are, to be sure! There is not the least need to send for my things from the hotel. And if you did but know what a little time I have to spend with you, you would not be so eager to run away from me."

These words had the desired effect. They prepared her to hear his cruel announcement. She dropped into her chair, and looking at him uneasily said:

"Oh, Alick, dear, you are not going away again, are you?"

"Yes, my child; I shall be compelled to leave you again, and very soon. Now listen to me and be reasonable, my good little girl. I have kept my word and come back at the time I said I would. Have I not?"

"Yes, Alick," she answered, in a low, meek voice.

"Well, in order to keep my word with you, Drusa, I had to leave my business and come off in a great hurry. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Alick."

"And the state in which I left my affairs makes it absolutely necessary for me to go back to Richmond immediately."

"Yes, Alick dear; but you will stay with me a day or two at least?"

"No. I came only to keep my word with you. I must go back this evening."

"Oh, Alick!" she exclaimed in a tone full of grief, as she let her work fall from her hands and gazed at him with a look of despair that she could not control.

"Come, come, little Drusa, do be rational, little girl! See what an effort I have made to keep my word with you—dropping my most important business at a critical juncture, just to come home and see you. Now, really, I do everything in the world I can to please you," he said, so earnestly that he almost persuaded even himself that he did.

"Oh, yes, Alick, you do indeed; and you always have done so. What should I be, but for your loving kindness? A poor, desolate orphan, with no one to care for me! You are very good to me, Alick, and you always have been so; and I ought to be cheerful, as well as grateful, only I—cannot always—and——"

She could say no more; her voice broke into sobs, and she dropped her face upon her hands and wept.

"Humph, this is the thanks I get for traveling several hundred miles express to see you. I have but a few hours to spend with you, and you entertain me with tears! Very encouraging to me to come again, I must say!" he angrily exclaimed.

She could not reply; her whole form was shaking with her convulsive sobs.

He got up and walked about the room with his hands in his pockets, and whistled an opera tune.

She tried hard to suppressed her sobs and to command her voice, and when at length she succeeded in doing so, she held out her hands imploringly towards him, and pleaded:

"Forgive me, Alick. I could not help it, dear; indeed I could not. It was because I loved you so. I love you so, Alick!"

"Then I wish to the Lord you didn't love me 'so' that's all," he brutally exclaimed.

"Oh, Alick!" she said still holding out her hands.

"It is a cursed bore to be loved 'so!'" he repeated.

"Oh, Alick, you did not use to say so!"

"Perhaps I thought so, though! It's an infernal nuisance to be loved so, I tell you, and I'm tired of it!"

"Alick, Alick, you used to make me tell you over and over again how much I loved you. You used to say I couldn't love you too much, I couldn't even love you enough," she murmured, dropping her pleading hands upon her lap.

"Bosh! I must have been a great spoon in those days!"

She did not reply to this, but again covered her face and wept softly.

"Besides," continued this moral philosopher, "such love as yours is—what do they call it in the prayer-books?—'inordinate affection.' And inordinate affection is very sinful, let me tell you, and will bring its own punishment. Sooner or later you will suffer for it."

"Oh, I have, I have suffered for it, have I not?"

This wail came from her unawares, and the next moment she was sorry for having let it escape her, sorry for the feeling that prompted it; for she could not bear even in her thoughts to blame one whom she worshiped so madly.

"Well, if you have suffered, it is your own fault."

"I know it, Alick—I know it; and I never meant to say that it was yours."

"Then what in this world is the matter with you? What do you need more than you have? Of what do you complain?"

"Of nothing, Alick—I complain of nothing. I am out of my senses, I think."

"I think so too. Here you are in a position that would be envied by hundreds—yes, by thousands, by millions of your sex, as the height of woman's happiness. You have a comfortable and even an elegant home; and I mean to settle it on you also. You have a luxurious table, a splendid wardrobe, attentive servants, horses, carriages—what in the world *can* you want in addition to these?"

"Only a little more of my husband's company, Alick," she pathetically answered.

"Bosh! You are a Christian, or you profess to be one. You read your Bible. Why don't you go by it? St. Paul says, 'Having food and raiment, be therewith content,' or words to that effect. You have not only food and raiment,

but every comfort and luxury that money can buy. Why cannot you be content?"

"Oh, Alick, dear, yes! I have all *money* can buy. But there are blessings that money cannot purchase. Oh, Alick, I could be content with very much less of this world's goods than your wealth has given me; I could be happy with very little food and raiment, if only I had more of your society."

She was weeping softly, with her head bowed upon her hands.

He was still walking up and down the floor.

Presently she got up and met him with her hands held out.

"Do not leave me, Alick, dear—oh, do not leave again so soon. You have made me your wife, and I have no life but in you—none, Alick, none! If you tear me from your heart, I shall wither and die like a plant pulled up by the roots. Oh, take me to your bosom again, for I have no life out of you, Alick—Alick——"

It was not in human nature, at least not in a young man's nature, to resist her beauty, her pleading; and he folded her to his heart, covered her face with kisses, and then said:

Little Drusa! little Drusa! oh, my dear, dear child what a misery for you that you should love me, wretch that I am!"

"But why, Alick? Why? It is my life—my very life! and I have no other!"

"Oh, Drusa! Drusa! Good Heaven! How is this to end! I wish from my soul you had never had the misfortune of meeting me!"

"Oh, Alick, why do you say that?"

"I don't know!" he groaned. Then he answered evasively—"I am utterly unworthy of you. I cause you so much suffering."

"But that comes of my weakness, not of your fault, dear Alick. Besides I am happy now, very happy now that I see you love me."

"Little Drusa, did you ever doubt that?"

"I never doubted your faith, Alick. When you have kept away from me, I have doubted my own worthiness of your love."

"My darling, if you were sure, entirely sure of my affection, could you then bear that I should be absent from you a great deal?"

"No," she answered, honestly; "I couldn't even live, Alick. I couldn't live away from you, any more than a flower broken off."

"Oh, my soul! what will become of you, child? Better with your strong affections, better you had died in your infancy!" he muttered to himself.

"What is the matter, Alick? What are you saying?"

"I am thinking of you. Poor child! With your nature you can never be happy in this world."

"Oh yes, I can, dear Alick! It takes so little to make me happy. Only let me live with you and I ask no more of earth, or Heaven."

"My darling, I do believe, I do believe, if all other things were conforming, you could also make me very happy," he said gravely and tenderly.

"I should try so zealously to do it, Alick. I would never vex you with weeping or moping. Because you know I never did weep for anything but your absence; and if I might be with you I should never have cause to weep again. If you must go back to Richmond, Alick, can't you take me with you? I could get ready in half an hour, or in less time. And I wouldn't be troublesome to you on the journey, indeed I wouldn't, dear. Say, will you take me?"

"My little Drusa, it is impossible. I should not be able to stop in Richmond over twenty-four hours. I should have to go into the country and travel from place to place, on this vexatious business. But don't look so despairing, darling! I will not stay a day longer than I can help," he said, putting her gently from his arms, and throwing himself down into a chair beside her work-table.

She also resumed her seat. And she took up her needlework.

"What are you amusing yourself with, little Drusa? Dressing dolls?" he inquired, taking up and inspecting the little, embroidered robe that lay upon her lap. "Is this for a great doll!"

"No, Alick," she answered, while a rosy blush and tender smile of joy and embarrassment brightened her

face. "It is not for a great doll, it is for a little angel who is coming to us soon."

"The d—l!" exclaimed Alexander, invoking his master and guide.

She heard him and looked up hastily in surprise and pain.

"I thought you would be glad, Alick," she said.

"Well, hem, so I——if I'm not glad, it is for your sake, Drusa," he said, confusedly. Then, gathering more self-control, he added: "You are very young, little Drusa, to have the cares of maternity thrust upon you."

"Such sweet cares, Alick—not to be known from joys."

"But you are scarcely sixteen years old!—too young, too young, Drusa."

"But if I was old enough to be a wife, dear, I am old enough to be a mother."

"You are too young to be either, little Drusa."

"You didn't use to think so. Oh, Alick, I thought you would be glad. I am sorry you are not."

And she folded her little robe up, and put it out of sight.

"It seems I cannot open my lips without wounding you, Drusa," he muttered, moodily.

"Don't say that, Alick. Come, let us go down. I want to show you how pretty the drawing-room looks. And I want to show you the young birds—I mean the new broods of canaries, hatched since you left," she said, cheerfully rising.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

GONE FOR GOOD.

One hurried kiss, one last, one long embrace,
One yearning look upon her tearful face,
And he was gone, and like a funeral knell
The winds still sighed—Beloved, fare thee well!—MRS. ESLING.

SUPPRESSING all her mortification and sorrow at the cold reception her husband had given her sweet news, Drusilla took him through the renovated house and showed him all its new improvements.

As if to make up for the previous surliness, he admired

everything he saw and praised his little housekeeper for her taste.

Then he said he would go to the stable and look at the horses; and he asked her to get her bonnet and come with him.

She ran up-stairs, calling Pina to follow her. And while she was putting on her thick shoes and her bonnet and mantle, she gave the girl particular directions about the dinner. For as Mr. Lyon had so short a time to stay, Drusilla did not wish to leave him long enough to pay a visit to the kitchen.

Then she went down-stairs and joined her husband. And they walked together to the stable.

Everything there was found in a satisfactory condition and the horses were in fine order. Evidently Leo had done his duty, as well as, or better than, so young a groom could be expected to do it.

Then Drusilla invited Alexander to walk through the grounds, that she might show him the new garden she had laid out. And, as before, he expressed delight in all he saw, and approbation of her skill as a landscape gardener.

"You take so much pains to beautify this place, and find so much pleasure in the task, that I hope you will be very happy here, little Drusa," he said, as they turned to go back to the house.

"I shall be very happy here, or anywhere else, dear Alick, when you have got through that troublesome business and can come and stay at home with me," she replied.

He shrugged his shoulders, but made no answer. She did not see his questionable gesture, so she continued:

"For indeed, Alick, you and I live now more like mere acquaintances, than like a married couple. And you seem less the master of the house than the occasional guest of the mistress."

He laughed at this conceit, and then sighed as he replied:

"I don't see how it can be helped, little Drusa. I wish it could be, in some way. Heaven knows how it pains me to part with you."

And Mr. Alick thought of Joe Smith and the Mormon Bible and wished that one had been a true prophet and the other a divine revelation.

"Oh, dear Alick, it is selfish in me, I know, but I am

glad it pains you to part with me; and I hope it may hurt you so badly that you may not be able to stay away," said Drusilla, with a sweet smile.

"Ah, little Drusa! however distressing it may be to me to absent myself from you, I must do so when duty requires the sacrifice," sighed Alexander, piously. Then, to change the subject, he inquired—"You have seen nothing more of the face at the window, little Drusa?"

"No, nothing at all. But then the windows, since you left, have always at nightfall been closed and curtained," she answered.

"Nor heard anything of the man lurking about here?"

"No, not a word."

"Nor gained any clue to his identity?"

"No, none."

"Then you have not been annoyed by any such intrusion since I left you?"

"No, not by any."

"I am very glad to hear it, little Drusa."

As he spoke she recollected the disorderly party who had followed her carriage from the city; and thought that truth required her to mention the circumstance, so she added:

"Oh, Alick, yes. I didn't write to you about it, because I knew it would only make you anxious to no good purpose, and besides I only wished to write you good news——"

"What now, Drusa? What is it? What have you been keeping from me, it is very wrong for you to keep any secrets from me, let me tell you," anxiously exclaimed Alexander, looking searchingly in her face.

"Oh, Alick, it was no secret at all. It was only a little rudeness I was made to bear."

"Rudeness! From whom?"

"From people who were scarcely responsible for their actions, Alick."

"Who were they? What rudeness did they offer you?"

"You remember those officers that came into our box at the opera?"

"Yes—vagabonds! vulgar wretches! what about them?"

"They saw me in at a Ladies' Tea Room in the city, one day when I went shopping."

"In a Ladies' Tea Room! Drusilla, I am shocked that you should have gone into such a place unattended. I am annoyed beyond measure that you should have done so! No modest young woman, not to say lady, ever goes alone to such a place!"

"Alick dear, it was the very room you used to take me to, whenever you took me to the city in the first days of our marriage. And I saw ladies there and young ladies and little girls, and even babies and nurses—and one always feels right and safe where there are babies, you know."

"No; I don't know it. And besides the ladies and children you speak of were family parties; you went *alone;* no wonder you were insulted. Which of the villains insulted you—or did both?"

"Neither did, Alick dear. Please don't be angry. One of the officers came up and spoke to me, calling me 'Miss,' and claiming my acquaintance. But as you had not introduced him to me I would not know him."

"And—then?"

"I left the Tea Room and got into the carriage and drove home."

"And was that all?"

"No; the two officers and the two women that were with them jumped into a hack and followed me."

"Ten thousand demons!—*Home?*" burst forth Mr. Lyon.

"Ah, Alick dear, no; don't be so violent. There was no harm done. I wouldn't even have mentioned the matter, only you asked me a question that I was bound to answer truthfully," pleaded the gentle creature.

"How far did they follow you?"

"Only to the gate of the road leading through the woods to our house—"

"To our—" Here Alexander burst into an explosion of oaths and expletives that caused his wife to shudder with horror.

"Oh, Alick, Alick, don't, dear! don't! It is a sin! Oh, Alick, hush! You frighten me so!" she pleaded almost breathlessly, clinging to his arm.

"If I catch one of those villains I will blow his brains out. If I don't, may the—" And here Alexander sealed his oath by invoking a terrible imprecation on his own soul if he failed to keep it.

"Oh, my love, my dear, don't, don't. Heaven will never forgive you!" wept Drusilla.

"Stop whimpering, you provoking little fool, and tell me. Did they attempt to follow you through the gate?"

"Yes, Alick, but they couldn't do it, because Leo closed it and locked it——"

"Oh! let me only lay my eyes on them—that is all! If they get off with life may I be——"

"*Hsh-sh!* Oh, Alick, dear, this is awful!"

"Hold your tongue, and take your hand from my lips! And now, if you can speak to some purpose, do so! How long was this ago that they dared to pursue you?"

"About nine days since, Alick. But they scarcely knew what they were about. Indeed they did not, Alick love!"

"Have they troubled you since?"

"No, not once. I have neither seen not heard of them since, nor has any one else annoyed me."

That is well so far. But now I am convinced that one of those villains was identical with the spy who frightened you by looking through the window. I wish I had not to hurry back to Richmond to-night. If I could only remain in the city one day, I might settle accounts with these gentlemen.

"Oh, Alick, then for the first time I am—what I never thought I should be—glad that you are going away so soon! Ah, my own dear husband, absence is bitter, but not so bitter as sin and its consequences! Oh, my dear, dear Alick, I shall pray day and night that Heaven may keep you from blood-guiltiness."

By this time they had reached the house, which they soon entered.

But Alick did not get over his fit of fury until some hours later, when dinner was served and he had eaten a hearty meal, and drank several glasses of fine wine, and was luxuriating in the sedative vapors of a real Havana.

The fragrant fumes of the good cigar did not drive Drusilla away. She sat near him with a little piece of crochet work in her fingers.

"I want you to promise me one thing, Drusa," said Alick, taking the weed from his lips.

"I will promise you anything in the world," she answered.

"I dare say! But would you perform it?"

"Yes, indeed, Alick."

"If you could."

"Oh, of course that is understood! Providence permitting, I will do whatever you wish."

"Well, the promises I wish you to make me will not be very hard to keep. In the first place, I want you to give me your word that you will not go into Washington unless in case of necessity."

"You have my word for that, Alick."

"And when obliged to go, that you will show yourself as little as possible; that you will never recognize or speak with any acquaintance, old or new, whom you may happen to meet."

"I give you my word for these also, Alick."

"And that you will never under any circumstances whatever, or to any person whoever, give your name or address, or mine."

"Take my word for that, too. I promise—solemnly promise to remember and obey all your directions, Alick."

"That is right," he said. And he resumed his cigar, and smoked in comfort for some minutes, and then threw away the stump, and got up, saying:

"I must see about going."

"Oh, Alick! So soon, dear!" she exclaimed, in dismay.

"So soon? Why, it is seven o'clock now, and the boat leaves at nine. I have but two hours to get it."

"Leo can drive you there easily in one hour, Alick. The horses are quite fresh, and will go like the wind. And besides, I want you to take tea with me before you leave," she said, touching the bell.

"Well, I can take a cup of tea while Leo is putting the horses to the carriage, I suppose," he admitted, resuming his seat.

Pina came in to answer the bell.

Drusilla told her to set the table for tea. And Mr. Lyon directed her to tell Leo to put the horses to the car-

riage and bring it around to the door, and to get himself ready to drive to town.

Pina went out to obey both her orders.

"You will not be long absent this time, will you, Alick?" inquired Drusilla.

"I do not know, Drusa; but not a day longer than is necessary," he evasively replied.

"But—can't you give me some little idea, Alick, just to comfort me while you are away? Will you be gone a week, ten days, a fortnfght—or how long do you think, dear Alick?"

"Now, Drusa, my child, you must not seek to bind me by any promise to return at any fixed time. See how it has inconvenienced me on this occasion, and without giving you much gratification either. Here, because I felt bound by the promise I had given you, I was compelled to drop my business at a most important crisis, and hurry on here just to see you for a few hours, and then hurry back. If you had not bound me by that promise, I *might* possibly, by staying a few days longer in Richmond, and putting my business in a better state of progress, have been enabled to come and stay longer with you. But as it is, I must be off at once. So you see the evil of binding a man to any fixed time."

"Yes, Alick. I don't wish to bind you to anything, dear. I will only trust that you will come back to me as soon as you can," she meekly replied.

"As soon as it shall be proper to do so, I will come back," he answered evasively.

Pina came in and set the table, and brought in the tea service and arranged it.

They—the faithful wife and faithless husband sat down together for the last time at that table.

She filled his cup and handed it to him, and urged upon him the delicate dainties that she had prepared for him

And Alick, whose appetite seldom suffered under any circumstances, enjoyed the luxuries of the tea-table as much as if he had not dined sumptuously a few hours previous.

But as soon as he heard the carriage approaching the door, he got up, went into the hall, followed by Drusilla.

Here he put on his overcoat and gloves, snatched his wife to his bosom for one hasty embrace and adieu; then took his hat, ran out of the house, jumped into the carriage, and ordered the coachman to drive fast towards town.

The carriage started.

And this time Alexander was gone for good.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CRUEL TREACHERY.

> And be these juggling fiends no more believed,
> That palter with us in a double sense;
> That keep the word of promise to the ear
> And break it to the hope.—SHAKESPEARE.

ALEXANDER had come and gone like a dream. And, in truth, his flying visit had given his young wife little comfort. He had spent more than half the few hours he had passed at home in grumbling.

As usual, she could not find it in her heart to blame him. To keep up her spirits, she set about putting in order her little house that had been somewhat disarranged by his sudden arrival and departure. In the words of another wronged woman, she was "resigned, but not happy."

Her days passed quietly, if not cheerfully. She occupied herself with her small household affairs; with making up the pretty lilliputian wardrobe upon which she was engaged; with taking care of her birds; and with gardening, walking and riding during the day.

She spent her evenings in reading and writing, or singing and playing.

She was comforted with three sweet hopes; the first was for his letters, the second his return, and the third the arrival of the little stranger.

She arose with the earliest dawn of day, and she retired early in the evening, and so her health continued to improve.

But day succeeded day, until a week had passed away and still she received no letter from her absent husband Then she grew weary and sad.

The truth is that Alexander, with a false mercy, in keeping with his false course at this time, was putting into practice his sapient plan of "breaking with her gradually," which was just distilling to her, drop by drop, the bitterness of "despised love"; inflicting on her the intolerable torture of a slow heart-breaking.

After ten days had gone by she received a note from him; it was short, cool and dry. He said that he had reached Richmond in safety, but had been too busy to write before; that he was well and hoped she was; and that he remained her affectionate—"A." There were not half a dozen lines in the whole letter, and Drusilla thought the writing did not look like Alexander's hand. But she read it over and over again, and her tears dropped slowly down upon it as she murmured:

"'Too busy to write' to me—'too busy to write.' Oh, Alick, dear, what sort of business would it be that could keep me from writing to you for ten whole days? But then, I am a woman and you are a man, and that makes all the difference, I suppose. But, oh, my heart is so weak—so weak, my Heavenly Father!" she cried, suddenly, in her sorrow, appealing to the All Compassionate.

And then again she betook herself to work as an antidote to despair.

After this a heart sickening month of silence passed away, in which she heard no word from him. And then she got a second note, dated from some distant village in New England, from which he wrote to tell her that he had been traveling for the last four weeks, and he was traveling still upon that business growing out of his father's will; that it would be useless for her to write to him, as he was continually moving rapidly from place to place, and could not wait to receive her letters. His health continued good, and he hoped that hers did. And he was ever her friend—"A."

This letter filled less than half a page, and the writing was even less like Alexander's than that of the other one had been. And Drusilla wept bitterly over it.

"If I were not his wife, I should think he was deserting me by degrees," she sobbed, hitting at last the very truth.

In addition to all her other causes of distress, she had

the bitterness of knowing that he had not waited to get one of the affectionate daily letters she had directed to him at Richmond; that they were all wasted, like her love, because he had not even taken the trouble to tell her that he was going to travel.

And now one word about Alexander's duplicity, which he called discretion. (If people could be got to call crimes by their right names, perhaps they would not commit them.) When Alexander was at home, having access to all Drusilla's boxes, he secretly got possession of all the letters he had ever written to her and he destroyed them. His first subsequent letter was written from Richmond, to which he had come with his uncle and cousin for a sojourn of a few days previous to setting out with them on a tour of pleasure. His second one was from a hamlet in the Green Mountains, where he was staying with the General and Miss Anna, in these first warm days of July. Both letters were written in a disguised hand, and signed only with his initial, lest they should ever be brought up against him.

Some suspicion of his bad faith was forcing its way even into the confiding bosom of his wife. But the heart-wasting weariness of the next few weeks, who can tell? To keep her heart from breaking, she kept steadily at work. Ah, work! How great is the love of our Heavenly Father in commuting the very curse laid upon man at his fall into blessings; in infusing into the very punishment of his sins consolation for his suffering. For surely, in addition to its creative and productive force, work has consoling power, since, next after religion, it is to the desolate and weary-hearted the greatest comfort on earth.

Drusilla found it so; for, if occupation did not give her happiness, it certainly kept her from despair. The months rolled slowly on. One of the most distressing elements in her misery was the fact she could not even write to her husband, not knowing where to direct her letters; and this was further embittered by the knowledge that he himself had cut off all such communication between them.

Still she continued to send Leo daily to the post-office in the hope of getting a letter from him; but week after week wore away without bringing news of Alexander.

In the hope of hearing of him, if she could not hear from him, she wrote and ordered the principal daily papers from all the great cities in the north. And huge was the bundle that Leo brought every day from the news agent in Washington.

And when she was disappointed in getting a letter, as she was always sure to be, she would, with a morbid eagerness, carefully con over the names in the list of arrivals at the various hotels in all the cities, in the faint hope of seeing his name in some one of them.

But this was worse than "hunting for a needle in a haystack," for it was hunting for what was lost somewhere else.

Sometimes in fear and trembling she would even look over the deaths and the casualties, in the dread of seeing his name among the victims. But she never saw it anywhere. We could have told her, "Naught is never in danger." If she did not see the name of her truant husband, she saw something else that startled her, and it was this:

NEXT OF KIN.—If the heirs of the late Reverend Malcomb Sterling should see this advertisement they will please to communicate immediately with the undersigned, from whom they will hear something to their advantage. KENT & HENEAGE,
Solicitors, 33 Bar street, Baltimore.

Drusilla stared at this notice in astonishment. And then she read it over again two or three times. *She* was the only living representative of the late Malcomb Sterling. Her father's last pastoral charge had been in Baltimore. This advertisement appeared in a Baltimore paper, and the firm to be communicated with were Baltimore lawyers. Clearly the notice orginated with some one who had taken pains to trace her poor father's last abiding place, in order to advertise there for his heirs. It must, therefore, be of considerable importance.

Her first impulse was to cut out the piece and enclose it in a letter to her husband, that he might deal with it as he should deem proper. But then she instantly recollected that she was ignorant of Mr. Lyon's address.

After a little reflection she concluded that it was her own duty to communicate with the advertising parties.

So she sat down and wrote to the firm of Kent & Heneage, and told them that she was the only child of the late Reverend Malcomb Sterling, by his wife Anna.

She sent off this letter; and soon forgot all about the matter in her all-engrossing anxiety to hear from her husband.

As before, she every day sent Leo to the post-office, with orders if he should find a letter by the first mail to hasten home with it immediately; if not, to wait for the second mail.

On a fresh and brilliant morning of the third day after she had written to the lawyers, Drusilla was at work in her flower-garden, when she saw Leo galloping towards the house, and holding out at arm's length a letter.

The face of the boy, who had seen and understood his mistress's daily disappointment, was beaming with delight, as he drew rein before her, sprang from his saddle, and handed her the letter.

She seized it eagerly, believing it to be from her husband, and exclaimed in her joy:

"Oh, thank you, Leo! At last—at last! Oh, I'm so glad!"

"'Deed, so am I, ma'am—glad as if I'd had a fortin left me," answered the boy, showing in every tone and look as much sympathy as he could combine with very much respect, "which it is from master, ma'am, and I hope he is well?"

But the little lady's face had fallen. The letter was not from her beloved husband, announcing his speedy arrival. It was only from the firm of Kent & Heneage, and it *only* informed her of her inheritance of a vast estate, by the decease of a bachelor great-uncle, who was a merchant of San Francisco with a corresponding house in Baltimore, and who had recently died intestate in the first mentioned city.

This news would have made some women very happy. But not Drusilla. The reaction with her was great. Tears of disappointment swelled her eyelids, and dropped upon the open page.

Leo, who was watching her in reverential interest, seeing her tears, now spoke:

"I hope nothing is amiss with master, ma'am!"

"No—I don't know. Oh. Leo! it is not from your master; it is nothing but a mere business letter from a lawyer!" said the little lady, with a sigh.

"Is that all, ma'am?" responded the boy in a disappointed tone.

"All, Leo," his mistress answered, as she turned sadly towards the house.

She did not care a farthing for the death or the inheritance of the old bachelor uncle, of whom she had not heard mention made more than three times in her life, and who, while he was rolling in wealth, had left her dying father, her mother and herself to suffer the bitterest pains of poverty.

She neglected to answer the lawyer's letter, and gave herself up to grief and anxiety about her careless but still beloved husband, until a week had passed away, when she received another, and a very urgent latter from Messrs. Kent & Heneage, asking to hear from her by return mail.

This one she immediately answered. And this was the beginning of a long epistolary correspondence between Drusilla and Kent & Heneage of Baltimore, and Speight & Wright of San Francisco. In the course of this correspondence the heiress learned that both those legal firms had been the solicitors of her uncle, the millionaire, and that the first had managed his business in Baltimore, and the last in San Francisco; that the whole estate, comprising the property in both cities, was estimated at three millions of dollars, and consisted in warehouses, shipping goods, and bank stock. But she was also advised that she would be required to prove her identity, and establish every link in the chain of evidence that connected her with her uncle before she could take possession of the property. And Messrs. Kent & Heneage tendered her the help of all their legal skill, learning and experience, in establishing her claims.

Young as she was, Drusilla saw at once that there would be no difficulty in proving herself the lawful heiress of the deceased Crœsus. So she wrote to the lawyers that the genealogical line to be traced was very plain, short and straight; that every point in its progress

could be proved by church registers court records, private letters, and personal friends.

Then the firm wrote to her requesting a personal interview, and offering either to receive her at their office in Baltimore, or to visit her at her own home in Washington.

And here arose Drusilla's first difficulty. She had dated her letters, not from Cedarwood, but simply from Washington City, and though she had signed them Drusilla Sterling Lyon, she had not said one word about her state as a married woman, thus unconsciously leaving it to be assumed that she was a widow, acting upon her own responsibility. She could not write of her marriage, because it had been her husband's will that it should be kept secret from all but the faithful servants who were in their confidence. And for this cause, also, she could neither visit the lawyers at their office, nor receive them at her house. She was puzzled how to act.

"Oh, Alick, Alick, dear," she sighed, as she read over again the lawyer's letter: "Oh, Alick, darling, how your long absence and this forced secresy does constantly compromise me. I find myself in a cruelly false position. What shall I do now? Wait till I see you before I take another step in this matter? That is what I must do."

And she sat down and wrote to Messrs. Kent & Heneage, telling them that it was not just at present convenient for her to leave home, or to receive visitors, but that she hoped it might be so in a few weeks.

"And this looks very like a subterfuge," she said to herself as she revised her own lines. "And what will they think of me for putting them off in this foolish way? Think me an impostor as likely as not. And who can wonder if they do? Oh, Alick! Alick!"

She sent her letter off, and for a week or ten days, she heard no more of her legal friends. This correspondence, embarrassing as it was to her, and difficult as it was for her to manage, upon account of her false position as a secretly wedded wife, had nevertheless done her good, in distracting her thoughts from the intense grief and anxiety she had suffered from the long absence and total silence of her husband.

Meanwhile, the summer wore wearily away. On the

first of September, she received another letter from her new legal acquaintances, praying her no longer to neglect so important a matter as the establishment of her claims to the heirship of the great Sterling property.

Amid painful feelings of shame that she might not speak out plainly, that she must be secretive and seem deceitful, she penned a reply, asking the lawyer's pardon for having appeared neglectful, beseeching them yet to have a little patience with her; telling them that circumstances which she could not at present command, precluded her from proceeding farther in this matter; but expressing an earnest hope that in a short time she might be able to do so. She begged to assure them that as she was truly the lawful heiress of her deceased uncle, Charles Sterling, being the only surviving descendant of his only brother, and he having left no other kindred, so her claim to the estate could not fail to be established; and that when it should be, she begged them to believe, that they should find that their time and labor, and kind interest in her affairs, had not been thrown away.

There was a simple, earnest truthfulness and good feeling in this other mystifying letter, that must have carried conviction of the writer's good faith even to the unbelieving legal mind. For within three days, Drusilla received an answer from the firm, saying that they regretted the delay upon her own account, but would wait her pleasure and convenience.

And so this correspondence ceased for the time being.

September passed slowly away, without bringing any letter from Mr. Lyon. And oh, in what weariness, heaviness, sorrow and soreness of heart, it passed with the young neglected wife, who can describe, or even imagine? She was almost dying of hope deferred. A fatal suspicion of her husband's falsehood was slowly, but surely, eating its way into her heart and life. And still the bitterest element in her sorrow was the fact that she could make no appeal to any remaining tenderness he might have for her, not even knowing where to write to him.

October came, and then,—

"When hope was coldest, and despair most deep,"

a letter arrived from Alexander. She was that evening

sitting and shivering, not from cold, but from nervousness, over a bright little fire in her dressing-room, when Pina ran in, without the ceremony of rapping, and exclaimed, breathlessly:

"It's Leo, ma'am, which he's just brung a letter from the post-office, as he says must be from master, because it's got Richmond printed on to it, and he can read print, though not writing. And he says how he'll bring the letter in and put it into your hands himself, and here he is——"

Before Pina had finished half her speech, Drusilla had jumped up and run to meet Leo.

As he entered the room, with his face beaming with pleasure, she snatched the letter from his grasp, tore it open and devoured its contents.

Ah! poor child! little comfort that long-looked-for letter brought her. It was shorter, drier and colder than any that had gone before it. Alexander vouchsafed not one word of excuse for his long silence. He announced his arrival at Richmond; and told her that he could not with propriety pay her a visit that autumn, for reasons that he would explain to her in a subsequent letter; he hoped that she was in as good health and spirits as he begged to assure her that he himself was; and he subscribed himself her friend and well-wisher, "A."

Drusilla dropped the letter, and burst into a passion of sobs and tears, that much alarmed her loving servants.

They thought no less than that their master had met with a fatal accident, or was smitten with a deathly disorder if he was not already dead and buried.

They tried to help and comfort her.

Leo went and brought her a glass of ice-water.

Pina poured some Florida water upon a handkerchief and offered her saying caressingly:

"Oh, mist'ess, dear, don't take on so; It's the Lord's will, you know."

"It is NOT, Pina! The sin of man is NOT the will of God!" passionately broke forth the long-suffering soul.

"Oh, mist'ess, dear, 'scuse me. I didn't know 'twas sin. I thought 'twas only sickness, or something."

"I—hush!—I spoke hastily—I spoke without thinking. There, Pina, that will do. Thank you, child. Go, leave

me now; I am better by myself; *do* go. Leo take her away," with difficulty gasped Drusilla.

And when she had got her servants out of the room and bolted the door, she threw herself into her chair and gave free vent to the suppressed sobs and tears that had been nearly choking her.

"Oh, what a letter to write me! After such a long and cruel silence too! Cannot pay me a visit this autumn! '*Pay me a visit!*' What does he mean by that? This is his home and I am his wife. And he signs himself my friend and well-wisher. '*Friend and well-wisher!* And no more than that? Why he is my husband! Oh, *what* does he mean by this cruel letter?" she cried, with streaming eyes and heaving breast.

Then she drew from her bosom the small black silk bag, took from it the piece of paper of which mention has already been made, read it through her tear-dimmed eyes, then kissed and replaced it, saying:

"If it was not for this precious little document, I should think he meant to abandon me. I should fear that I was not his wife. I should fear I had been fooled by a false marriage. But this bit of paper proves that I am truly his lawful wife—though he treats me more like a— Ah, Heaven forgive him! I am very glad I found this little document. It reassures me when I doubt. And this great grief so clouds my mind that I suppose I can't help doubting even when such doubt is mere madness. But I have the paper, and 'seeing is believing'" she sighed.

Ah! how little the poor young creature knew that the document upon which she founded her faith in the indissoluble legality of her marriage was the very same upon which Alexander Lyon, her husband, based his belief in his freedom from matrimonial bonds.

But this is a mystery.

As soon as she had recovered some degree of composure, she availed herself of her knowledge of his address to write to him the first letter she had been able to send him in some months. In this letter so entirely was she taken up by her love and her sorrow, that she utterly forgot to mention the enormous fortune that had been left her. She wrote him a long, earnest, impassioned appeal, praying him by the love he once bore her, and by the love that she

must ever bear him, since it was the life of her life, to come to her, if only for a little while; she said, pathetically, that she would never ask it again.

"Oh, these words are cold and lifeless," she wrote. "But if you were here, my soul would find some means of reaching yours. My lips and my eyes and my hands would show you that they only live when they meet yours. Oh, come home! I die, Alick! I die! Come and save me! Come, if only for a little while. Oh, my beloved, my whole heart and soul and life goes out in this cry—*Come home!*"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AGONY.

The peace that others seek they find;
The heaviest storms not longest last;
Heaven grants, even to the guilty mind,
An amnesty for what is past.
I only pray to know the worst,
And wish, as if my heart would burst.

—WORDSWORTH.

As before, day after day passed slowly and sadly over the head of the young forsaken wife. The golden month of October was declining towards its close, and still she received no letter from her husband in answer to her last impassioned appeal.

She wrote again and again; but with no better success. How he must have steeled his breast against her to resist the pleading of her letters, where every word seemed a tear of blood wrung from her crushed and bleeding heart. But most likely he did not even trust himself to read them.

In this agony of suspense, she must have either maddened or died, but for the "little angel" she expected; for it is scarcely possible for the mother of an unborn babe, even under the greatest trials, and heaviest sorrows, either to lose her reason, or break her heart. In making ready for the little one, and in looking for its coming she found an antidote against despair.

But her moods, of course, varied with the state of her

nerves. There were times in which she hoped, when her hour should come, that both she and her babe might be permitted to die, and go to their eternal rest.

"Where I shall never trouble him more; or, perhaps regret him, either, though this is doubtful. Oh, Alick! Alick?" she would exclaim, with a burst of tears and sobs.

But these miserable spells of despondency she always repented as sins. And she afterwards prayed that her babe might live, and she might be forgiven, and spared and strengthened to raise it.

She was so young and inexperienced that she did not know when to count upon the advent of the little stranger; but she felt sure that the time could not be far off.

It was in the last days of October that she received another letter from her recreant husband. She was standing at the window of her bed-chamber, watching for the arrival of Leo from the post-office, as she had watched for so many days, when she saw the boy riding towards the house.

She tapped on the glass panes to attract his attention, and he heard her, and he pulled a letter from his pocket, and held it up to view as he struck the spurs to his horse's flanks and dashed rapidly up to the door.

She rushed down to meet him, and snatched the letter.

"From Richmond, madam," he said; "which I hope master is well, and is coming home."

"Yes, from Richmond," she said, tearing the envelope open, and beginning to run her eyes over it, as she went back to her room and sank into her resting-chair. For the poor young wife and expectant mother could not now rush about and excite herself with impunity.

She sank, faint, dizzy and breathless, into her chair, and tried to read her letter; but the words ran together, and the lines reeled before her eyes; and some minutes passed before she was sufficiently recovered and calmed to do so. And as she gathered the meaning of this most cruel of all his heartless letters, her pale face grew paler still, her breath came in short gasps, and her frame shook as with an ague fit.

Before she had quite finished reading it, she let it drop from her hands, threw up her arms, and, with a piercing shriek, fell forward to the floor.

And well she might.

This murderous letter Alexander had sent to his wronged wife as a *coup de grace.*

In it he told her that humanity had induced him to prepare her, by a long abstinence from her society, for the painful communication he was about to make. He dared to hope that by this time she must have seen that there was something wrong in their union, and some good cause other than he had before stated for his keeping away from her. He said that now he believed she was ready to learn, without a great shock, which he had studied to spare her, the true cause of his parting from her. He then went on to tell her that early in the month of March he had discovered, to his own great astonishment, that their union was utterly null, void, and illegal; that he could not find it in his heart at that time to shock her with the fatal news; but he made up his mind to prepare her for it by degrees, and finally to break it to her very slowly. He begged to remind her that since the day upon which he had made the discovery of the unlawfulness of their connection he had never wronged her by intruding into her private apartments, or treating her otherwise than with the reserve due to a lady and the affection owed to a sister. He repeated that he had tried to spare her pain in the breaking of this tie, the severance of which was as distressing to him as it could possibly be to her. He assured her that, though duty forbade him ever to see her face again, he should provide for her future welfare, by securing to her the little estate upon which she lived. He concluded by telling her, that as propriety required all possible intercourse, even by writing, to cease between them, and as he himself was about to leave town for the country, it would be useless for her to reply to his letter.

It is to be noted that in this cruel communication he took care to say no more than was absolutely necessary to quell and quiet her claims on him. He did not even call her by name, but addressed her as "my poor little friend." He did not acknowledge the receipt of any of her letters. And, worse than all, he failed to specify the cause of the alleged illegality of their marriage—whether it had chanced in any informality of the ceremony, which

might be remedied by a second and more careful solemnization of the rites; or whether it existed in the shape of some insurmountable impediment that must forbid their union. Nor did he venture to allude to his former betrothal and his approaching wedding with his cousin Anna. Indeed, all proper names of persons and places seemed studiously left out. The writing also, was in a disguised hand, and without date or signature.

Altogether it was a careful work of a cautious man, who would have been an astute villain and a successful schemer if he had not, in the blindness of his selfishness, overreached even himself.

It bore no internal signs of the writer or of the person to whom it was written. It might have been sent by another man to another woman. It could never be successfully produced in evidence against any one in any court.

But if he took this precaution with the idea that his deeply wronged wife could ever drag her domestic sorrows before a public tribunal, and expose his private letters for her own vindication, he had studied her character to very little purpose.

The blow he had dealt had well-nigh proved her death stroke. It struck her to the floor. Her cry and her fall aroused her servants, who came running to her room in haste. They found her stretched in a swoon on the carpet, with the open letter beside her.

"Master's dead now, for sure!" exclaimed Leo, in consternation.

"And no harm done if he is!" cried Pina, who had, with her woman's wit, long ago detected the bad faith.

"But it's killed mist'ess!" groaned the boy.

"It hain't! it's only overcome her like! Help me to get her up, and don't stand there blubbering!" said the girl.

Between them they tenderly lifted their mistress and laid her on the bed.

"Now, Leo, you go out and stop in the passage, so as to be in calling distance if I want anything. And leave me alone with my madam. I've seen her in these here fainty fits before, and I know what to do with her. Come, now!" impatiently exclaimed Pina, seeing that her

brother still lingered, "be off with you, will you? It ain't no ways proper for you to be looking on while I'm unloosening of her clothes!"

This hint drove the boy in haste from the room.

Pina proceeded to undress her mistress, turning her about very gently on the bed, until she had freed all her fastenings so as to give her lungs the fullest play. Then she applied the usual potent stimulants, and after much patient effort, she had the pleasure of seeing the little lady open her eyes.

But Drusilla recovered her senses only to fall into the most violent paroxysms of grief and despair. Convulsive sobs shook her whole frame; bitter groans burst from her lips; tears gushed in torrents from her eyes. As her passion of grief arose, she wrung her hands, and writhed, and threw herself from side to side, moaning piteously. Then in her frenzy of despair, she sprang up and began walking about the room, striking her hands together, and uttering piercing cries.

In truth, hers was not a mute grief. Your "silent sorrow" belongs to a little later period of life, when years have taught the sufferer such resignation that she will "die and make no sign." But on this stricken young wife a blow had fallen, heavy enough to crush the strongest woman, while she was yet little more than a child. And she felt it with all a child's intense sensibility, and she grieved with a child's excessive vehemence.

Vainly her maid tried to restrain her or to comfort her. Pina followed her mistress up and down the room, weeping for company, and pleading with her—

"Oh, mist'ess darling, don't take on so dreadful! Don't, mist'ess, that's a dear! Oh, what has happened? Tell your true servant, who never left you but only once, and never will do so wicked an act again, never, if there's twenty robbers in the house. Oh, mist'ess, what's the matter?"

"Oh, girl, girl, he has left me, he has left me forever," cried the poor young wife, with another gush of tears.

And it showed how utterly abject and self-abandoned she was in her profound and terrible sorrow, when she could forget her dignity, and make complaint in the presence of her youthful servant.

"He has left me, Pina! Oh, he has left me forever!" she repeated, wringing her hands and sobbing violently. "He has gone, he has gone for good!"

"Blest if I don't think it *is* for good! and a good riddance of uncommon bad rubbish!" grumbled the girl in a low voice; but she did not dare to let her words be heard.

"Oh, what shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?" cried the wretched wife, walking wildly about the room and wringing her hands. "He has left me forever! forever and ever!"

"Don't you believe one word of that, ma'am, now, don't, that's a dear lady! Lors, he wouldn't have the heart! he couldn't stay away from you forever, no, not if he was to try to ever so hard," said Pina, soothingly, as she followed her mistress.

"But he says so himself! he says so!" exclaimed Drusilla, with a passionate burst of weeping.

"Well, he says so, and maybe he thinks so, but he can't do it. It's only because some wicked woman has got the whip hand of him now. But lor bless you, *that* can't last. All men is fools, ma'am. I know that much, if I don't know any more. But lor! the foolishest of 'em knows gold from brass, and is sure to come back to the old love and the true love, for their *own* interests. Goodness knows they never does anything for ours! He'll come back, ma'am! Bad pennies always does."

"Oh," moaned Drusilla, "how low I have fallen! how low, to say what I have said, and to hear what I have heard! Pina, my girl, hush. You must not speak of your master in this manner, especially in my presence. It is untrue of him and disrespectful to us both," she added, as calmly as she could force herself to speak, as she dropped into her resting-chair.

This was but a short lull in the storm of her grief; for presently, the keen sense of her husband's desertion and her own desolation, pierced her heart, and she fell into a fresh paroxysm of sobs and tears, and leaving her chair, walked distractedly about the room, raving and wringing her hands as before.

Pina went to her and threw her arms around her saying:

"Oh, mist'ess, mist'ess, don't do so! You'll kill yourself and kill your child!"

"Better I were dead! better my child should never be born!" cried the frantic woman, abandoning herself to the wildest excesses of despair.

"Oh, mist'ess, don't say so! and don't rave so! If you have no pity for yourself, have some for the poor little blind and breathless baby that depends on you for its life; and don't kill it before it has even a soul to be saved!" pleaded Pina, touching the most sensitive chord in the mother's heart and in the Christian conscience.

"Give me something! Give me something to benumb this keen pang, then. Give me opium! Give me anything that will dull my heart and brain without doing harm," she demanded, sitting down in her chair, and making a great effort to control the violence of her emotions.

Pina mixed a composing draught of tincture of valerian and water and brought it to her mistress.

Drusilla drank it, and its effects upon her sensitive system was instantaneous and powerful. Though her eyes still streamed with tears, the convulsive heavings of her bosom subsided, and she became comparatively calm.

"Now, mist'ess, darlin', you just let me help you to bed and you lay still and keep quiet. And I will darken the room and sit by you. And maybe you will go to sleep and then you will be better."

And Drusilla, docile as a child now, suffered her maid to put her to bed.

While the girl was smoothing the white counterpane and making everything tidy about the dainty couch, Drusilla suddenly put her hand to her throat and with a frightened look cried out:

"Where—where is——?"

"Oh, you mean the little black silk bag, ma'am, that was tied around your neck?" inquired Pina.

"Yes! yes! where is it?"

"I took it off when I undressed you, while you were in your fainty fit."

"Where did you put it?"

"In your upper bureau drawer, ma'am, where it is quite safe."

"Oh, Pina, bring it back to me directly."

The girl obeyed.

"Is it a relic, ma'am?" inquired Pina.

"Yes," answered her mistress. And so it was, though not of the sort Pina was thinking of.

"Oh, I beg pardon—I didn't know, ma'am."

"And now, Pina, no matter how ill I may become, you must never let this be removed from my bosom again. It is more precious to me than anything I have in the world except my Bible and my wedding-ring," said Drusilla, as she fastened the treasure around her neck.

"Indeed, ma'am! Then I will be very careful not to have it removed. Now try to compose yourself, ma'am," said Pina, as she proceeded to close the shutters and draw the curtains to darken the room.

Drusilla complied with this good advice and, folding her hands as if in prayer, lay very quietly.

Pina went to the chamber door and spoke to Leo, who had remained on duty in the passage for some hours. She told him that their mistress was now better, and that he might go down-stairs and look after his own affairs, and that she would call him if his services should be needed.

Leo, glad to hear of the little lady's improvement, glad also to be relieved from duty, hurried down into the kitchen to look for something to eat, of which he stood greatly in need, not having broken his fast since he went to the post-office in the morning.

Pina took her place by her mistress's bed, and patiently watched there.

Night deepened; but the girl lighted no lamp, finding the subdued glow of the low wood-fire on the hearth sufficient to see by.

Drusilla lay so motionless that Pina thought she slept. But by bending down and looking attentively at the supposed sleeper, the watcher saw that her lips were moving as in silent prayer. And soon deep sighs arose from the sufferer's bosom, and large tears rolled down her face. She was awake and weeping.

Pina silently arose and mixed another dose of the beneficial composing draught, and brought it to the bedside.

Drusilla drank it. And soon after she fell asleep. And the youthful watcher, with her heavy head dropped upon the side of the bed, also slept well.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SUSPENSE.

Oh, weary struggle! Silent tears
Tell seemingly no doubtful tale;
And yet they leave it short, and fears
And hopes are strong and will prevail.
My calmest fate escapes not pain;
And, feeling that the hope is vain,
I think that he will come again.—WORDSWORTH.

AT daylight Pina awoke. Finding her mistress still sleeping heavily under the influence of the sedative, she arose and replenished the fire and then went down-stairs and got her own breakfast.

After which she prepared some very strong coffee and some delicate milk toast, and took it up to the lady's chamber and set it upon the hearth to be kept warm until her mistress should awake.

But with the hapless young wife the awakening was but the return to anguish.

With great difficulty Pina prevailed on her to take a little food. There was but one argument the girl could successfully use with the expectant mother—her child. To keep up her strength for its sake, Drusilla tried to eat and drink, though even the coffee and the soft toast seemed to choke her in her effort to swallow them.

After this little repast she fell back upon her pillow, too spirit-broken to wish to leave her bed.

Pina opened the front windows to let in the cheerful light of the golden autumn morning; and then she took the breakfast tray down into the kitchen.

Leo was sitting there, polishing his cutlery.

"How's mist'ess?" inquired the boy.

"It's hard to say. I know I'd rather see her in a rale bad spell of illness, like the typus fever, or something, than this way. Her heart's broke; that's how she is. And I tell you what, Leo, long's master's done broke faith with mist'ess I don't see how we got any call to keep faith long o' him," grumbled the girl.

"Broke faith with her?" echoed the boy, pausing in his work.

"Yes, that letter he writ said he wasn't coming back no more. And that's what's killed her."

"My goodness!"

"And now look here, Leo—if *he's* not coming back to take care of her, somebody must, that is certain. I don't know enough, although I did help mammy to bring up all my little brothers and sisters."

"Well, what do you want *me* to do? I'll do anything in the world for mist'ess."

"Well, I tell you. Leo, I want you to go down to Alexandry and fetch mammy to her."

"But good gracious me alive, that is as much as my ears are worth! Didn't master order us not to have any followers, not even our own kin folks?"

"But I told you before, if master don't keep faith 'long o' mist'ess, we ain't got no call to keep faith 'long o' him, 'specially when it's to rist her life."

"Oh, if that's the case, I'll go at once," answered the boy. For it was only necessary to convince him that his mistress's safety depended on "mammy's" arrival to make him eager to go and fetch her.

Yet just as he was about to leave the kitchen he turned and inquired:

"But isn't better to ask mist'ess first?"

"*No;* she would be sure to object, though it's for her own safety. You go and fetch mammy. And then I'll let on to mist'ess how she come on a wisit to me, promiscuous like, and I'll 'vise mist'ess to see mammy."

"All right; but if you get me into a scrape for nothing, you know, Pina, it will be your own fault."

"Just so; and I'll be willing to bear all the blame."

Leo went upon his errand, and Pina hurried up to her mistress's chamber.

Drusilla had thrown herself out of bed, and was walking distractedly up and down the room, with her dark hair falling down over her white night-dress, her face pale, her eyes wild, and her fingers wreathed and wrung together in an agony of grief.

Vain were all Pina's efforts to soothe her.

"Oh, I do but feel my trouble more and more! more

and more as the hours go by! If I only could see him! If I could see him once and speak to him, he would hear me! he could not let me die before his sight," she sobbed forth, with her eyes streaming with tears, whose fountains seemed exhaustless.

"It's like p'isoning of her to save her life; but it's what the doctors do, and I must do it," said Pina, as she poured out a large dose of valerian and coaxed the sufferer to drink it.

As before, the powerful sedative quickly took effect. And Drusilla let her maid lead her to her resting-chair near the window, and seat her in it and put a foot cushion under her feet.

"There, mist'ess, sit here and be quiet. I wouldn't lay down on the bed too much. It isn't good for you. Sit by the window and look out at the Lord's good sunshine. Bless you, the sun shines still, spite of all the fools and wilyuns in the world. And here, I'll bring you your Bible and set it on your little stand before you. You used to take comfort in your Bible. Lor'! if we only loved *Him* half as well as we do some of his onworthy creeturs we needn't have our hearts broke by 'em," said Pina, as she made the arrangement she proposed. But her last sentiment was spoken *sotto voce* and did not reach the ears of her inattentive mistress.

Instead of deriving the consolation from the sacred volume which indeed she was too much overcome to seek, Drusilla dropped her head upon its open pages and seemed to pray, or weep, in silence.

"To think, when she gets wiolent, I have to knock her down with a dose of walerian this way! It's a'most like murder. And how's it a gwine to end? I wish mammy would come. I hope she ain't got no engagement nowhere else," muttered Pina to herself as she went and made up the bed.

At noon it was a work of difficulty and of diplomacy for Pina to get her mistress to swallow a few spoonfuls of the chicken broth she had prepared for her.

In the afternoon Drusilla was so much prostrated that Pina assisted her to bed, and darkened the room, that she might sleep, if possible.

Late in the evening Leo returned from Alexandria,

bringing with him a middle-aged, motherly-looking colored woman, who called herself "Aunt Hector, honey," but whom Pina rushed to embrace as "mammy."

As soon as the overjoyed daughter had relieved her mammy of bonnet, shawl and umbrella, and had sent them by Leo with the "big box, little box, ban'-box and bundle," up to the servants' bedrooms over the kitchen, she set about getting tea for the traveler.

She laid a cloth upon which she arranged her own best service, with cold ham, fried chicken, fresh butter, Maryland biscuits, and, lastly, a pot of fragrant imperial.

While Leo was out in the stable attending to his horses, the mother and daughter sat down to the table together.

"Now what sort of a home is this here you've got here, gal, where the marser is allus gone and the missus allus grievin' day in and day out?"

"Well, mammy, you know as one follows the other; and if the master's always gone the mist'ess is likely to be always grieving, if so be she cares for him, which our mist'ess do."

"What's he gone so much for? It looks bad."

"So it do, mammy, which it is bad too."

"But what's he gone *for?*"

"He say business—let me see—connected—yes, that's it—with his late father's will."

"Um-hum; allus some excuse with them men. To begin so airly, too; 'fore he's married a year. Lor', I thought you was agoing to have such a happy home, living fellow sarvint with your own dear brother, long of a young married pair with the highest of wages, and no 'sideration but to live quiet and keep away company. But, deary me! who can count on anything? Well, gal, I'm glad to get leave to come to see you at last. But what can I do for you? That boy, Leo, I couldn't get nothink out'n him, 'cept 'twas the marser was allus gone and the missus was allus grievin', and you wanted me to come and nuss her."

"Yes, mammy, that was it. And I hope you can stop now you are here."

"Oh, yes, I can stop fast enough. I have just got through nussin' Mrs. Porter with her fifth. And Liza Jane, she's out of service now and stopping home with

me to mend up her clothes; so she can take care of the house and chillun."

"How is sister Liza Jane and the rest?"

"Oh, they's well enough. All had the fever 'n agur in the airly part of the season, but when the frost came it killed it. But where's the young madam?"

"Sleeping now, mammy. I had to give her a great big dose of walerian."

"*You—you* dare to dose a lady? Look here, gal, don't you set yourself up for a doctoress because your mammy's one."

"Lor', mammy, what's walerian? I've seen you give it to ladies for the hysterics by teaspoonfuls."

"Seen *me?* Yes, but I tell you what, gal, you've got to p'izen a great many patients before you can be trusted to give physic like an ole 'oman. But don't you try that on again, gal, I tell you."

"Lor', mammy, what on the yeth was I to do with her, when she was raving distracted mad a'most? a pacing up and down the room a tearing of her beautiful hair out by the roots, and wringing and a twisting of her fingers offen her hands all but! I 'clare to the Lord and man I was 'fraid of my soul as she'd dash herself against a wall, or fling herself out'n the window. And nothing on yeth but walerian would quell her. That's the reason I sent for you. I didn't like to take the 'sponsability to keep on a knocking of her over with that there weepon; but I couldn't let her 'stroy herself neither, so I had to give it to her, whether or no, till you came."

"But what on the yeth did the creetur take on so about? Not *his* being away."

"Yes, it was, mammy. His being away and his disappointing of her by not coming back when he promised. Men is such wilyuns!"

"And wimmin is sich fools! For my part, when the chillun's well the men may go to Old Nick for me! But she ain't got no chillun to comfort her, poor young thing."

"Not *yet*, mother," said Pina, significantly.

"'Not yet?' What do you mean, gal? *Soon will!*"

"Yes, mammy."

"When?"

"Don't know exactly; neither does she; but soon and that's another reason why I sent for you."

"Um hum. Well, if that's so, she's not to be let to go raving and tearing about, let who will come or stay away," said the wise woman.

The abrupt entrance of Leo put an end to this part of the gossip.

The boy sat down at the table and took his tea.

"And now, mammy," said Pina, "as it's late and you're tired, I'll show you where you are to sleep. I shall have to stop in the room with the mist'ess."

"And mind you, don't give her any more physic, 'out calling me fust," said mammy, as she followed her daughter up to the little room above the kitchen.

Pina dismissed Leo to the stable loft, fastened up the house, raked out the kitchen fire, and then returned to her mistress's chamber.

The poor little lady was in a troubled sleep, broken by fitful sighs and sobs, and muttered words of which "Alick" was the only one to be distinctly heard.

Pina just loosened her own clothes and sat down in the lounging chair by the side of the bed to watch or sleep, as the case might be. She slept, of course; and her sleep was so deep that she did not know her mistress awoke and arose a little after midnight and paced the floor, weeping and wringing her hands, until daylight, when she fell exhausted upon the bed and dropped into a short and fitful slumber, disturbed with gasps and starts.

By sunrise Pina opened her own eyes, and seeing her mistress lying very much as she had left her when she fell asleep, the girl arose and replenished the fire and went down into the kitchen.

Here she found "mammy" making herself at home and in full blast before the range getting the breakfast.

"Well, and when am I to see the madam, I'd like to know?" inquired Aunt Hector.

"Soon's ever she wakes, mammy; which you know you couldn't see her last night, 'pon account of you being tired and she sleepy."

"How is she this morning?"

"Sleeping like an angel, which so she's been a doing of all night."

"Um hum, you been a giving of her more o' that walerian!"

"Deed I ain't, mammy, which she hasn't needed of it."

When Pina and her mother and brother had had their breakfast, the girl prepared some rich and delicate chocolate and some nice light muffins for her mistress's morning meal, and took them up to the lady's chamber.

Drusilla was awake, though pale and worn.

After having bathed her face and hands with diluted Florida water, she consented to take a little of the refreshments that Pina brought and set upon a stand by her bedside.

While Drusilla sat up in bed and sipped her chocolate, Pina broached the subject of her mother's presence in the house.

"Mist'ess, I want to tell you, ma'am, as my ole mammy has come to see me, a little bit. I hope you has nothing of no objection *now*, ma'am?"

"None in the world, Pina. Mr. Lyon ——" She had nearly broken down and wept again when she pronounced his name; but she gasped, recovered herself and went on—"Mr. Lyon used to object to having even your relatives come to the house, but now that he is not here their coming or going can make no difference.

"And you don't object on your own account, ma'am?"

"No, Pina, no; I don't. It is good to have your mother come to see you. I wish, oh, how I *do* wish I had a mother to come to see me, in my great trouble!" she added with a little sob.

The tears rose to Pina's eyes, as she answered:

"My mammy is only a poor colored 'oman; but indeed, ma'am, if you will let her, she will do for you as loving and as tender as any mother."

"Will she stay with you long, Pina!"

"She would like to stay some weeks, if you would let her, ma'am."

"She can stay as long as she likes, for your sake, my good girl. But your mother—she must be in years, Pina?"

"She's past fifty, ma'am, I believe."

"Is she—experienced?"

"Beg pardon, ma'am?"

"Is she—wise, skilful, knowing, I mean, about sickness and about children?"

"Oh! yes, ma'am, which that is her profession, brought up to it, ma'am."

"Then I think it very providential that she is here now. Oh, I am very inexperienced and helpless! Pina, I think I should like to see your mother and have a little talk with her. When you take away this service you may bring her up."

"Oh yes, ma'am! thank you, ma'am. She'll be so glad to pay her 'spects to you," said the girl, delighted that the proposal she had so much dreaded to make, had been so kindly received.

But the moment Pina left the room, Drusilla fell back upon her pillow in a storm of sobs and tears, and gasping forth at intervals:

"Oh, Alick! Alick dear, to leave me at such a time as this, and I so friendless and so ignorant, I might die! I wish I could!"

After a few moments, hearing footsteps on the stairs, she ceased sobbing, and tried to compose herself.

Pina discreetly knocked at the door.

"Wait a moment," said Drusilla, wiping her eyes and smothering the last convulsive throes of her bosom. And then——"Come in," she called.

Pina entered, showing in her mother.

Drusilla turned with forced calmness to welcome the stranger.

"How do you do? What is your name?" she inquired, in a gentle tone.

"My name's Aunt Hector, honey, ladies' nuss, which I have recommendments to show from the head doctors, ma'am," answered "mammy," curtseying.

"I think it very fortunate for me that you are here. I hope you will be able to stay with me."

"Which it is my intention so to do, long as I shall be wanted, honey, and no longer."

"Thank you, I would like to talk with you a little. I have no mother, and I am as ignorant as a child of many things I ought to know—Pina, my good girl, you may

leave the room, and you needn't come back until you are called. I wish to speak in private to this good nurse."

As Pina left the room and closed the door behind her, mammy turned to her patient, and said:

"I hope, ma'am, that gal does her duty, which it is always my pride and ambition to bring up my chillun so to do."

"She is a very good girl, and pleases me perfectly."

"I am oncommon glad to hear it, ma'am."

"And now I wish to speak to you of——" Drusilla hesitated.

"Yes, honey, I understand. Speak out and don't mind me. I'm an ole nuss, you know, chile."

Thus encouraged, Drusilla began to speak of the state of her own health, of her youthful inexperience, and of her forlorn circumstances.

In doing this she tried to cover the sin of her guilty husband, by explaining his absence in the stereotyped manner that he himself had often used, and putting it upon the ground of "business connected with his late father's will."

But this effort was too much for her superficial composure. The very name of Mr. Lyon overthrew her self-control. In speaking of him her voice faltered, then she choked, gasped and broke into a violent fit of sobs and tears that shook her fragile frame almost to the point of dissolution.

The nurse was much too wise to coax or scold her patient. But the sly old fox, who had blown her daughter up for meddling with dangerous drugs, went herself and mixed a composing draught for the sufferer—and not of the harmless valerian that had been administered by Pina, but of potent morphine that in a few moments sent Drusilla into a sleep that lasted all that afternoon and night.

But, ah! when she did at length awake, on this the third morning after the great blow had fallen on her, she awoke but to the renewal of anguish intolerable; of sorrow that refused to be comforted; of despair that had forgotten the very existence of hope.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HOPING AGAINST HOPE.

'Tis hard, so youug—so young as I am still,
To feel forevermore from life depart
All that can flatter the poor human soul,
Or fill the heart.

Yet there was nothing in that sweet and brief
And perished intercourse, now closed to me,
To add one thought unto my bitterest grief
Upbraiding thee. —OWEN MEREDITH.

It would be too painful to follow the young and deeply wronged wife through the first weeks of her great trouble.

They were passed in paroxysms of vehement and inconsolable sorrow, alternating with periods of dull stupor, partly the result of reaction from high excitement, and partly the influence of the nervine sedative administered by her nurse.

The course pursued by this woman in the treatment of her young patient was upon the whole very judicious. She did not lecture her on the subject of her inordinate abandonment to grief and despair. But she artfully drew her attention away from the contemplation of her troubles, to the consideration of those last and most important preparations for the arrival of the little expected stranger, in which mothers and nurses usually find such absorbing interest.

She amused the youthful matron with certain necessary alterations in the arrangements of her chamber, with fitting up of an adjoining room as a nursery, with the decorating and furnishing of an infant's basket, and a berceaunette or wicker cradle, and with the arranging of the lilliputian wardrobe in a beautiful miniature bureau.

In these natural and pleasing occupations, Drusilla found some relief from her heavy sorrow.

The late October weather was glorious with all the gorgeous splendor of the Indian summer, glowing through the heavens and the earth, and kindling up the foliage

around the wild-wood home with a beauty andrefulgence of color, richer and brighter than those of spring or summer.

With the advice of the nurse, Drusilla every morning took a short drive through the woods, and every afternoon a slow saunter into the flower garden.

Under happier auspices, this child of nature would have derived much enjoyment from the season and the scene. Even in her misery she felt something of their soothing and cheering influence.

And the beneficial effect of this course was soon apparent in her. Her paroxysms of grief became less frequent and violent. Her nerves grew calmer, and her brain clearer. With this healthy reaction came reflection. She thought upon the fixed past, the troubled present, and the doubtful future.

She now exonerated Alexander of all blame in his cruel neglect of her. He thought, she mused, that their marriage was illegal, and therefore he was just in his avoidance of her. He knew that the separation would go near to kill her, and therefore he was merciful in gently loosening the tie, instead of suddenly wrenching it apart. He felt that loving and tender letters would but melt and weaken her heart, and therefore he was wise in writing shortly and coldly. No doubt he suffered—poor Alick! as much as she did, though he would not add to her distress by telling her so. He had loved her so much! so much! and now he was heroic in his self-restraint for her sake! So she justified him to her own heart. For to honor him was with her even a greater necessity than to love him.

But she wondered that he did not tell her the reason why he thought his marriage with her was illegal. And more than all she wondered what that untold reason could be. Her conjectures wandered over every possible and impossible theory of the case :

"First, that Alexander while at college, or while in Europe, had contracted a secret marriage ; that when he wedded her he believed himself a widower ; and that he had recently discovered the existence of his first wife. But this theory was no sooner conceived than rejected ; for she remembered that he had been solemnly betrothed

to his Cousin Anna from her earliest youth, and that upon his return from Europe he had been about to marry her, when the wedding was arrested by the death of his father.

Secondly, that this very pre-contract to Anna Lyon, might have rendered his marriage with her (Drusilla) illegal. But this was also set aside as unreasonable, for she recollected that the contract had been broken by Miss Lyon, as he himself had assured his bride.

Thirdly, that Alexander had discovered some very near blood relationship between himself and his wife that made their union unlawful. But this was at once repudiated as quite impossible, for she knew his genealogy, as well as her own, could be too distinctly and too far traced to admit of such an idea.

So imagination traversed the whole field of possibility and impossibility, and found nothing to invalidate her marriage.

Then she came to this conclusion: (and in it her instinct sided with her reason)—that there never had existed any sort of impediment to her union with her husband, and her marriage was perfectly lawful and righteous.

And *now* did she blame him?

Oh no! she ascribed his whole conduct to——

MONOMANIA!

And when she found this answer to her inexplicable riddle, she could have sung and danced for joy!

Her marriage was not illegal; it was only private. And her adored husband was not faithless; he was only mistaken.

She had been told of monomania—she had heard how men might be a little insane for a time upon one single subject, while perfectly sane upon all others. She knew also that this was not a dangerous type of madness, but was often only the transient effects of fever, passing off with returning health. She wondered whether he had been ill.

Under this view of the case, she resolved to write to him. True he had forbidden her to do so; and even assured her it would be useless for her to write, as he was about to leave Richmond for a tour through the counties.

But she reflected he must have left directions at the

Richmond post-office to have his letters forwarded to him wherever he should be, and her letter directed to Richmond would be sent after him with the rest of his correspondence.

So she sat down and wrote him a letter—patient, loving, pitiful, and even cheerful; gravely reasoning with him upon the fallacy of his idea that their marriage could possibly be unlawful; playfully inviting him to return that she might convince him how very righteous and legal their union was; then tenderly pleading with him to come and be with her in her approaching hour of trial and danger. She said no word, dropped no hint of the bitter anguish his letter had inflicted upon her, of how nearly her brain had been crazed, her heart broken, and her life lost in despair. Nothing that could possibly distress him did she write; but all she could think of to convince, comfort and cheer him. And she prayed Heaven to bless him; and she signed herself his true wife, for time and for eternity.

When she had sent off this letter, which she did early on a splendid morning of the last days of Indian summer, she felt so hopeful and so light-hearted, that she longed for a pleasant gossip with some one. So she rang for her old nurse.

"Well, honey! gracious knows it does me good to see you so chirping!" said the old woman, dropping cozily into a soft, low chair by the fire.

"Nurse," said Drusilla, cautiously approaching the subject that now occupied her thoughts—for she was determined to keep her husband's name out of the question—"nurse, in all your professional experience did you ever encounter monomaniacs?"

"'Count—*which*, honey? 'Many money knacks? What's that? tricks to make money? No, child, I can't say as I ever did."

"I meant to ask," said Drusilla, smiling, "if in all your tending of the sick in these many years you ever met with anybody who was mad on one subject only and sane on all others."

"Cracked in one place? Yes, child, many and many a one."

"Tell me about them."

"There was young Rowse Jordan—I mean young Mr. Rowsby Jordan. He had typhoid fever, and after he got well for ever so long he fancyfied himself to be a coffee-pot and sat roosted upon the top of the table with one arm curved around for a handle and the other stuck out straight for a spout."

"How long did the hallucination last?"

"The—hally—which, honey?"

"Tut! How long did he fancy himself a teapot?"

"Coffee-pot, honey—it was a coffee-pot—Oh, for days and days."

"Did he get quite well again?"

"Oh yes, honey, and laughs now at his mad notion, for he 'members all about it."

"Tell me some more."

"Well, there was a lady patient of my own who would have it her legs was made of glass, and she kept them propped up against the wall behind the bed and wouldn't let anybody come near for fear of breaking of 'em."

"Was her head right on other things?"

"As right as yours or mine."

"And she got over it?"

"Yes, when she got well."

"Nurse, tell me—When a person is mad upon one subject, it is no sign that his mind is unsound, is it?"

"When his brain pan is cracked in one place, you mean?"

"Yes."

"Hi, honey, if a bowl leaks anywhere you can't call it whole, can you?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, then, no more can't you call a man's brain pan sound if it's cracked ever so little," argued the old woman.

"But they get over it. You have proved to me that they get over it," said Drusilla anxiously.

"Oh yes, they get over it. Bowls and brain pans both may be mended."

"Nurse, such a monomania is only a temporary affair, like the delirium of fever, is it not? It leaves no after ill effects upon the mind, does it?" she eagerly inquired.

Mammy, who did not quite understand the question but perceived that her patient was, for some reason or

other unknown to her, troubled upon this subject, hastened to soothe her by replying:

"Lors, no, indeed, honey—not the leastest bit in the world. 'Tain't nothink, honey, only somethink to laugh at when it's all over."

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear that," said Drusilla, with a sigh of relief.

"And now, honey, if you'll scuse me, I'll go down in the kitchen and see arter the chicking jelly for your dinner. I know as how that gal, Pina 'll spile it if I leaves it to her."

"Very well, nurse, go."

"And I 'vises of you, ma'am, to put on your hat and go for a walk in the garden. It's right to go out and joy these fine days, which few of 'em will be left for this season, and if there was you wouldn' be likely to get the good of 'em."

"Thanks, nurse, I think I will take your advice."

And mammy went down to her fancy cooking.

And mammy's young patient put on her hat and cloak, caught up a little hand-basket and went out and took a turn in the garden among the broad parterres of gorgeous autumn flowers that studded the spacious lawn in front of the house. She amused herself with carefully gathering the falling seed and tying up each sort in a separate paper, and putting it in her little basket, for future use.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

DICK HAMMOND IS ASTONISHED.

A party of friends, all light-hearted and gay.
At a certain French café, where every one goes.
Are met in a well-curtained, warm CABINET,
Overlooking a street there, which every one knows.

The dinner is done, the Lafitte in its basket,
The champagne in its cooler is passed in gay haste;
Whatever you wish for, you have but to ask it;
Here are coffee, cigars and liqueurs, to your taste.

—O. MEREDITH.

WHILE the young, forsaken wife was occupying her lonely hours with these simple pursuits, and waiting from

day to day to hear from her faithless husband, and hoping against hope to see him, events were transpiring in Washington calculated to have an important influence on her destiny. They were but trifles in themselves, however momentous in their effects. They were only a few bachelors' wine suppers, card parties, and such like means of ruin. But that fate hangs upon trifles, is a truth as old as the history of Eden lost for an apple.

This was the way of it:

After Mr. Richard Hammond had received his final dismissal from Miss Anna Lyon, "that unlucky dog," as his uncle called him, "fell among thieves."

Fell among thieves. That is the best way to characterize his misfortune in sinking again into the society of that dissipated set of men who ate his dinners, drank his wines, won his money, demoralized his habits and destroyed his reputation.

On a certain evening about this time, poor Dick entertained a few of his "friends" at supper in his rooms, at one of our fashionable hotels.

Among his guests were Captain Reding and Lieutenant Harpe, those two gallant officers of the Loafers' Guard, who had once affronted Alexander Lyon by obtruding themselves into his opera box, and afterwards insulted Drusilla by following her home.

A lady friend, whose husband, in his profane bachelor days, had been present at this orgie, told me something of what passed there.

When the cloth was removed, and wines, liquors, olives, hookahs, tobacco and cigars were placed upon the table, the "gentlemen" became more than ever at ease.

The conversation that had wandered over the general subjects of politics, field sports, operas, singers' throats, dancers' feet and beauties' points, now became personal.

"By the way, Hammond," said Captain Reding, taking the mouth-piece of his hookah from between his lips, and speaking through a cloud of smoke, "I see by the 'Valley Courier,' which I found upon your table, that Miss Lyon is really going to marry that prig Alexander. Is it quite true?"

"I believe so, sir," said Dick, changing color, and helping himself to a deep draught of cogniac.

"How the deuce was it that you let the heiress escape you?"

"The heiress, sir? I am not a fortune hunter."

"Oh, bosh! you know what I mean, well enough. Who the deuce would ever accuse *you* of being a fortune hunter?"

"Who, indeed? Fortune lavisher would fit you better! Eh, my boy?" put in the gentleman who afterwards reported this conversation, and who must therefore be nameless.

"But to return to the previous question," said Reding, "the previous question with an amendment. How was it that you let the beauty elude you?"

"The beauty, sir? I fail to comprehend you," said Dick, coldly.

"Ah, bah!" exclaimed young Lieutenant Harpe, rushing recklessly into the subject, for he was very much the worse for wine. "Why the deuce can't you speak out plainly, Cap', and call people by their names?—Miss Lyon! the beautiful Miss Lyon! the elegant Miss Lyon! the accomplished Miss Lyon! the belle of the season! the queen of the haut ton! the adored of Dick Hammond, whom she also adores! the betrothed of Alick Lyon, whom she abhors! And here's to her!" And with this, he tossed off a big bumper of brandy.

"Yes, that's so!" said Reding, "and that being so, why the mischief don't you run off with the girl, eh, Hammy, my boy?"

Now if Dick had not been drinking a great deal more than was good for him, he would never have let his cousin's name come up in such a company. Even as it was, he rather resented its introduction now, by keeping silence.

"Did you hear me, Hammy, my boy?" persisted Reding. "I asked you why—seeing she liked you so much better than she did that rum curse she was engaged to marry—why you didn't cut him out and run off with the girl?"

"In the first place," answered Dick, coldly, looking down into his empty glass, "it is not to be presumed possible that the 'girl,' as you ventured to call the lady, would have consented to run off with me."

"Then I'd be blown to atoms if I hadn't kidnapped her!"

burst forth young Harpe, who was very far gone in inebriation.

"That would scarcely be practicable in the nineteenth century and in Washington city, Lieutenant," answered Dick.

"No," laughed Reding; "telegraph wires and detective policemen have been the death and destruction of all gallant enterprises of that sort. Neither do I think such a violent measure would have been necessary in this instance He could have carried her off with her own consent, and nobody on earth could have prevented *that*, as they were both of age. Why didn't you do it, my boy, eh? You haven't answered that question satisfactorily yet."

"Because he didn't dare to!" recklessly interrupted Harpe. "He's one of the 'faint hearts' that will 'never win fair lady.' He didn't dare to."

"I will answer you in the words of another weak wretch who was stung by sarcasm into crime:

> 'I dare do *all* that may become a man;
> Who dares do *more* is none.'

In other words, Messieurs, I am quite as incapable of running off with another's man's betrothed as I should be in making love to another man's wife," said Dick, very gravely.

"Hear! hear! hear!" shouted Harpe; "he wouldn't run off with another man's betrothed! oh, no, not he! even when he knows he loves her, and she him! oh, no! no! sooner than he'd make love to another man's wife. As for me, I'd do either, as often as I could get a chance."

"Why, man alive," said Reding to Dick, "we are not in Spain, nor France, nor Germany, nor any other country where betrothal is held to be almost as sacred as marriage: we are in America, where betrothal means simply a conditional engagement between a young man and young woman to marry each other at a definite or indefinite time, *provided* in the meanwhile neither party should happen to meet with any one he or she likes better. Bosh! such engagements don't end in marriage once in ten times! Under the circumstances, I don't think you were bound to respect the betrothal."

"I differ with you," said Dick,

As for me," put in Harpe, defiantly, " I never in all my life fell desperately in love with a woman, until some other man called my attention to her merits by getting possession of her himself."

" You'll end in getting the sausage meat you call your brains blown out, some of these days, my fine fellow, if you don't take care of yourself," laughed the nameless gentleman.

" I'd like to know who's going to do it!" swaggered Harpe.

" Some indignant husband or lover, of course."

" Let 'em try it," crowed Harpe.

" I think, Hammond," continued Captain Reding, " common gallantry required you to try your fortune with that young lady."

" I wish, Reding, that you would drop the subject here," said Dick.

As she never took the least trouble to conceal her preference for you over Lyon, I do not see why we may not discuss the subject here. Why, Dick, it was evident to everybody who saw you three together, that she loathed Lyon and liked you. The thing was clear, it was patent, it was *flagrant*, under the circumstances! Now, come, Dick, honor bright! Why *didn't* you marry her?"

" I have answered that question already."

" Humph! Well! we all thought you would certainly carry off the prize. Why, you were always following her, hovering over her, waiting on her, and even apparently making love to her, which by the way was not very consistent with your present declaration that you would be incapable of marrying another man's betrothed."

" Hear! hear! hear " shouted young Harpe.

" That is so," frankly confessed Dick. " It is true that I sunned myself too much in the light of that bright lady's smiles. It was the old, old story of the moth and the flame. But no one was hurt except myself. I was smartly singed. I should, perhaps, have been entirely consumed but for a mercifully severe hand that took me away from the fatal light and warmth of the flame, and put me out in the cold and dark. And so—saved me."

And, saying this, Dick lighted his hookah and withdrew into a cloud of incense.

"Come, Dick, talk prose, not poetry, We're a practical party here, we are! The mercifully severe hand that took you away from the fire and put you out in the cold, was no other than the fair lady's hand that tendered you the traditional mitten. I thought so!" laughed Reding.

"No; it was the war-worn hand of a veteran soldier. My uncle had me up before him one morning; actually arraigned me in the most magisterial manner: set Alick's rights, Anna's duties, and my own trespasses squarely before me, and then appealed to my honor, to which, I need not say, Messieurs, no one ever yet appealed in vain. I have never seen my fair cousin since that day."

"Quite right, Hammond. I honor your principles," said the nameless gentleman.

"Ume-me-me!" groaned young Harpe, rising sanctimoniously. "My brethren, let us *awle* unite in prayer."

"Hold your profane tongue, sir," said Captain Reding, pushing the mocker down into his seat. "And don't drink any more brandy! You're crazy now. You'll be under the table presently."

"Sober as any man here," laughed Harpe, dropping into his chair.

"Appealed to your honor, did he, Hammond?" said Reding, turning to Dick. "Well, I suppose the word has some meaning for you and for the gallant old gentleman. But I wonder how Alick Lyon understands honor, and how he reconciles it with his present course."

"His present course. What do you mean?" inquired Dick.

"I should have said the course he has pursued the whole winter."

"What was that? I don't like Lyon. I cannot now. I all but hate him. But, still, I do not think him capable of doing anything dishonorable. He is too proud to do so, for one thing," said Alick's generous foe.

"Well, may be so. But I'd like to know what his ideas of honor are; or how he can *honorably* reconcile his position in respect to Miss Lyon with his relations to the little beauty at Cedarwood."

"The little beauty at Cedarwood!" echoed Dick, in astonishment.

"Yes, little Drusa!"

"Little Drusa——"

"Come, now, Dick, don't you be Forestic, Murdochic, Wallackic, or tragic after any of these schools. They're not in your line. So leave off echoing my words and staring at me."

"But you said something about a girl that he has got hidden away at Cedarwood?"

"Yes, I did."

"I don't believe it?" said Dick, bluntly. Then remembering that he was the host speaking to his guest, he courteously added: "You are mistaken, sir. Lyon, with all his faults, is not a villain."

"Who said he was? I didn't. All I say is, that he has got just the sweetest little beauty you ever saw in your life cozily concealed in a pretty cottage orneé at Cedarwood. And he is very fond of her, and she is entirely devoted to him; and he calls her sweet love, and little Drusa. And she is just the loveliest little creature the sun ever shone upon, with a clear pale face, and lustrous dark hair and eyes, of such unfathomable depths of passion and of thought that she might well be supposed to be from the East, and be a daughter of the Druses."

"Are you *sure* of this?" asked Dick, with emphasis.

"I'll swear to it."

"*Who* is she then?"

"Ah! that I don't know."

"*What* is she to him?"

"Can't undertake to say. I'll swear that this little beauty is living under his protection in his house at Cedarwood. But whether she is his wife, or his sister, or his mother, or his maiden aunt, of course, I can't tell. Doubtless it is some highly respectable connection of that sort, Mr. Alexander Lyon being master of the house. If it was *you*, Dick, you see we should all know what to think!" laughed Captain Reding.

Dick Hammond had been gazing steadily into the face of the speaker, and rubbing his own brows very thoughtfully and occasionally frowning painfully. But now he suddenly started up, struck his hand upon his forehead, and exclaimed:

"Good Heaven! It must be Drusilla Sterling!"

"Humph! Forestic again! You know her then?" said Captain Reding.

"Know her? I've known her from childhood. Poor little thing! So this is what became of her!" said Dick, in a voice of great pain, as he dropped dejectedly into his seat again.

"Now look here, you know; none of that! Don't you be gettin' up any interest in her; because, you see, I've made up my own mind that way. And when Lyon marries I mean to take the pretty cottage and the pretty girl both off his hands," drawled Harpe, very drowsily, for he was in the last stage of intoxication, and almost asleep.

"You can so well afford that sort of thing, with your lieutenant's pay!" laughed "nameless."

"Who is this girl, Dick, since you know her?" inquired Reding.

"She is as pure and good a girl as lives in this world. And, gentlemen, if she is at Cedarwood, as you say, under Alick's protection, my life and soul on it, she is his wife, or she believes herself to be such!" said Dick, earnestly and almost angrily, as if he challenged even the thoughts of men if they wronged the friendless girl.

No one seemed disposed to contradict him in words, no matter how much they may have differed from him in opinion.

"But who is she then, Hammond?" persisted Captain Reding, who never, if he could help it, left a point unsettled.

"Drusilla Sterling, a clergyman's orphan; brought up in Alexander Lyon's family; a protégée of his mother, a pet of his father. Little less than a year ago she disappeared from her home, and could never be traced by her friends. So she is with him, the hypocritical scoundrel! But she is his wife, or thinks herself so! My life and soul on it, she does, for she could not fall—she could not. I have known her from her earliest childhood—the sweetest child that ever lived—a little saint!"

"But are you sure she is the same with Alick's girl?" inquired Reding.

"I fear there is no doubt of it. The coincidence of name and circumstance is so complete. I can't think why I didn't recognize her when you first mentioned her;

though in truth I never heard her called Drusa, but Drusilla; and I never thought of her as a woman, but merely as a child, and most certainly couldn't associate her memory with any thoughts of license, but always with the most sacred sanctities of home."

"Were you her lover in the past as you are her champion in the present, Hammond?" laughed Reding.

"No—yes—I don't know."

"Clear, to the point, and satisfactory, that answer!" laughed the captain.

"I mean to say that I loved her, but not in the sense you mean. I loved her only as a great Newfoundland dog might love a baby; as a big brute like myself might love such a little angel as she was," said Dick gravely.

"Oh, yes, all women are angels until they are—found out!" mused Lieutenant Harpe, rousing himself.

"What did you say, sir?" coolly inquired Dick.

"I say," defiantly answered Harpe, "that all women are angels until they are found out, and then they are fallen angels, every one of 'em!"

"Speak for the women you know best, sir! for those you have been brought up with; for those you associate with; for those nearest and dearest to you. For, *of course*, of them only *can* you speak from knowledge! As for me, I judge a man and his family by his judgment of women. He who traduces the sex defames his own mother—and his sisters, wife, and daughters if he has them!" said Dick, indignantly.

Instead of attempting a reply to this scathing rebuke, the weak traducer of woman looked around on his companions, with a tipsy smile, and winking knowingly, said: "*I* don't mind *him*, bless you! *He* don't know what he's talking about; he's *tight*—tight as ever he can be! He wants to quarrel now; he's always quarrelsome in his cups!"

And having delivered himself of this opinion, he crossed his arms upon the table, dropped his head upon them, and resigned himself to sleep.

"Poor Harpe, he has a very weak brain," said Captain Reding.

No one else made any comment.

"Reding," said Dick Hammond, turning to the captain,

"I want you to tell me how you discovered the residence of this poor girl at Cedarwood."

"Why, you see we first saw her with him at the opera. It was quite early in the season, and they were in a private box. Harpe and I were in the orchestra seats. When the curtain fell on the first act we went around there to get a nearer view of the pretty creature, hoping also to get an introduction to her. But Lord bless you, Lyon scowled at us as if he thought we had come to pick his pockets. We wouldn't take notice of his black looks, but by being perfectly civil and self-possessed ourselves we compelled him to treat us with something like courtesy. But it was *only* something-like; it wasn't the genuine article itself; for he wouldn't ask us to sit down, nor he wouldn't present us to the pretty girl. And from that day I don't think he ever brought her into the city again."

"Then how did you discover her residence and her relations to him?"

"I am going to tell you. Some days that we met Lyon in the reading-room of the Brown House. We chaffed him about the mysterious little beauty, you may be sure. But he stopped us by telling us that she was the daughter of a clergyman, and was only passing through the city under his escort, and that she had returned to her home in the country."

"A mere evasion, of course."

"Yes; but we did not question the fact at the time although we did wonder how Alick came to be trusted with the escort of a young lady."

"I should think so. Pray go on."

"A little later we discovered the truth by chance. I went to spend a few days with an acquaintance I have living about a mile from Cedarwood. And while there, guided by some negroes, I went on a coon-hunt by torch-light. Did you ever see a coon-hunt by torch-light?"

"Often, when I was a boy; never since."

"Well, the sport was quite new to me, and as a natural consequence I got separated from the dogs and darkies, and got lost in the woods."

"A good beginning for an adventure," said the nameless gentleman.

"Yes. Well, to resume—while I was trying to find a

path, I saw a bright, indeed a brilliant light, shining through the trees at some distance. I went towards it, and found a beautiful cottage ornée, with its front windows splendidly illuminated.

"There was a party," said one of the guests.

"No; though as it was now between two and three o'clock in the morning, on seeing the lighted windows I was struck with the same thought. They are having a blow out in there, I said to myself. But it was nothing of the kind, my friends!"

"What was it, then?" inquired Dick, anxiously.

"Wait till I tell you. I pushed on towards the house, and when I came up to it, I saw no carriages, no servants, no life, no motion. Everything was as still as death. In fact, the whole house was closed up except the two brilliantly illumined windows, from which the light streamed far across the lawn, and deep into the woods."

"Go on! go on!" said Reding's companions, speaking in a chorus! And the captain, who had only paused to take a drink, continued:

"'Well,' I said to myself, 'this is a rum go, anyway!' And after walking round and round the pretty place, without seeing or hearing anything, I just climbed up to the window-sill and peeped through the lighted window."

Here the captain paused for pure aggravation.

"Well! well! what did you see?" exclaimed several voices.

"What did I see? Ah, my friends, I had a full view of a small terrestrial paradise! and a beautiful mortal houri! a little domestic Eden, with a sweet little Eve within it! an enchanted bower, with a sleeping beauty!"

"Do speak plainly, Reding! that's a good fellow," said the nameless gentleman.

"Well, then, I saw a nice, cozy drawing-room, the very picture of elegance and comfort; a fine fire of sea-coal in the grate; a luxurious little supper set forth in a splendid service on a round marble table; by its side an easy-chair, and a pair of slippers; at a short distance and nearer the chimney-corner a little stand, with an astral lamp and some books; and near it a lovely young creature, reclining in a resting-chair, fast asleep, with the book she had been reading fallen upon her lap."

"What a beautiful picture," said one of the company, while the others listened in silence.

"I immediately recognized the beauty of the opera-box; but as I live, gentlemen, I did not then connect her in my thoughts with Alexander Lyon. On the contrary, I believed his account of her, and I said to myself—'There is the little darling waiting up for her clerical papa, who has gone to make a pastoral call on some one of his parishioners who is dying.' And I hung there by the sill of the window, and looked in and fed my eyes upon the sweetness of the scene."

"Well? what then?"

"Then I heard horse's feet coming. 'Papa is returning,' I said to myself. And I dropped from the sill and hid myself in some thick bushes below it, to wait till papa should pass, so that I might make my retreat unobserved. It appears that the horseman went first around to the stable; for soon I heard rapid footsteps, approaching the house. And you may judge my surprise when I saw a young man run lightly up the stairs, and saw the door fly open, letting out a flood of light, and the little beauty rush into the arms of the newcomer, whom I then plainly recognized as Alexander Lyon."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Dick Hammond, in agitation.

"As if it had not been enough to know him by his face and form, I had his voice also in evidence of his identity. 'Are you as glad to see me as all this, my little Drusa?' he asked. And she answered with a shower of soft caresses and silvery tones."

"And then?" inquired Dick.

"Why, then, of course, the house swallowed them up. The door was shut and locked, and the brilliant windows were darkened, and they had their happiness all to themselves, while I was left out in the cold."

"You could not have been mistaken in what you supposed you saw and heard?" inquired Dick.

"No; how could I? That was not the only time I looked in at those windows either. A sort of fascination drew me there, to look in upon that lovely young creature. While I remained in the neighborhood, under the cover of coon hunting, I paid a visit to the lighted windows

every night. Ah! night after night! night after night did that sweet little creature sit there waiting for him, leaving the windows open to guide him home, and keeping his supper warm, while he, sorry dog, was engaged in gallanting Miss Anna about to balls and theatres, and scowling at better men than himself if they so much as looked at the belle."

"Reding, I am deeply grieved to hear this; scarcely less so than I should be if the poor child were my own sister. But I repeat and reiterate most emphatically this truth, that she is really his wife, or believes herself to be so!" said Dick, earnestly.

"I think you are quite right, Hammond! The young creature herself, and all her surroundings breathed so sweetly of what you called 'the sanctities of home life' that no one looking on her could think evil of her. Indeed I thought evil of *myself* though, sometimes, for seeming to play the spy. But I couldn't resist the temptation of looking into that beautiful interior. I meant no harm."

"And your contraband pastime was never discovered?"

"Oh yes," laughed Reding. "She rose once and turned round so suddenly, that she saw me before I could drop from my perch. She screamed and disappeared and I could have scourged myself for frightening her."

"And then, I suppose, your stolen visits ceased."

"Not a bit of it. I was only more cautious. But one night I purposely let myself be seen by *him*, on a rare occasion, when he happened to come home before daylight. It was to be my last visit, for I was about to leave the neighborhood."

"Did he know you?"

"No! for as soon as he got a glimpse of my face, he blazed away at me with his revolver, and you may rest assured, I didn't stop to claim his acquaintance! Ah, he had a good chase after me, and I had a good run and a good laugh! When I returned to the city, I couldn't keep the joke to myself. I had to tell Harpe, for which I was afterwards sorry; for the scurvy fellow, with a party of his companions, having met the poor little girl in the city after Lyon had left, took advantage of her unprotected state and followed her home, and would have

intruded into her house, if they had not been prevented by her servants."

"Reding," said Dick, gravely, "after what I have told you of this young lady, I hope and trust that you will abstain from speaking of her anywhere, and from doing anything to annoy her at any time. In a word, I appeal to your manhood, to treat her in all respects as you would treat the most honored woman of your acquaintance."

"I never wished to do otherwise, and as I never expect to see the little angel again, I shall never have a chance of doing otherwise. But here, I declare, the day is breaking. And we ought to do the same Wake up, Harpe! Come! Good-night, Hammond!"

And so the party separated.

Dick Hammond remained, walking up and down the room in deep thought. At length he took a sudden resolution—to seek Drusilla.

CHAPTER XL.

DICK'S NEWS.

If Sorrow has taught me anything,
She has taught me to weep for you,
If Falsehood has left me a tear to shed
For Truth, those tears are true.—OWEN MEREDITH.

THE greenness of the grass, the freshness of the flowers, and the splendor of the sunshine, still lingered; the glorious Indian summer still lived on through the gorgeous month of October, and even stayed to welcome the arrival of sad November.

At high noon, one day about this time, Drusilla was sauntering slowly through her garden, trying to gather strength and comfort from the beauty and refulgence of the scene and hour, when she suddenly heard the outer gate open.

She looked up to see the cause, and she started violently and changed color; for she saw—

Mr. Richard Hammond!

He was now walking up the avenue towards the house.

On seeing him, her first natural emotion was that of astonishment; her first clear impression was that he came from her husband on some errand to herself. All in a tumult of delight, she hastened to meet him.

"Mrs. Alexander Lyon, I believe," said Dick, at a hazard, and respectfully raising his hat as he came on to greet her.

"Yes, that is my new name," answered the young matron, with a smile and a blush of happiness, not of confusion, as the questioner particularly noticed.

"I knew it!" he exclaimed, emphatically and involuntarily.

"Knew what? knew me?" she inquired, pleasantly. "Oh course you did. Why should you not? It has been but two years since we met. And I knew you at a glance."

"Very likely; for an old fellow like myself does not change in two years, while a young lady like you grows up and gets married in the meantime, which makes *some* little difference," answered Dick, archly, partly to cover his confusion at having spoken his thoughts aloud, and partly to procure her confirmation of what he firmly believed—namely, that she truly or falsely imagined herself to be a wife.

"Oh, yes," she replied, still blushing and smiling, "I am married; and as you know that fact, which you could have learned only from my husband, of course you come from him. He is well?" she inquired, anxiety now betraying itself in her look and tone.

"Quite well," said Dick, who was now beginning to feel the embarrassment of the duty he had taken upon himself to do.

"And you bring me a letter from him? I have been looking for one by the mail; but I am glad he sent it by you?"

Dick hesitated and looked confused.

"Give me my letter, please," she said, holding out her hand with a smile.

"My dear Mrs. Lyon, I regret to say I have no letter for you," he answered, as calmly as he could.

"No letter!" she repeated, with a look of disappointment; and she sank down in the garden seat, because

from excess of emotion she was unable to stand. Then, soon brightening up with new hope, she exclaimed—"Oh, then, he has charged you with a message for me! Sit down here and tell me all he says."

Dick took the offered seat, but remained silent.

"Now, then, Mr. Hammond, tell me quickly what does Alick say? And, oh, forgive my impatience, but it has been so long since I have heard from my husband, and I have been so uneasy about him!" she said, and her hurried tones, her eager face and trembling frame all betrayed the excess of anxiety that agitated her

But Dick Hammond sat silent and immovable, cursing the fate that had thrust upon him a duty he found so hard to perform.

"Why don't you answer me? Why are you so silent? Why do you look so strangely, avoiding my eyes? What is the matter? Oh, Heaven, what has happened?" she cried, turning pale and beginning to twist her fingers.

"Mrs. Lyon," said Dick, with an effort, "I have neither letter nor message from Alexander."

"Neither letter nor message from my husband? I thought you came from him! I thought you came with his sanction. Else why are you here at all?" she asked, shivering with a vague alarm.

"Madam!" cried Dick, jumping up, flushing red, and, between his pity for her and his rage at Alick, losing all his self-command; "Madam, I came here to tell you that Alexander Lyon is a reproach to his name and to manhood! and totally unworthy of your regard, or of the notice of any honest woman!"

Drusilla was struck dumb.

For a few moments she gazed at him in blank wonder, while he strode up and down the garden walk before her, wiping his brows and trying to subdue his excitement. Then she arose slowly, stretched out her arm, and pointing to the outer gate said, quietly:

"Leave this place, sir."

He stopped in his furious walk and looked at her. She had ceased to speak, but was still standing pale and grim and pointing his way out.

He felt that he must keep his ground, and do his duty at any cost. He was sorry that his own rashness had

raised obstacles in his path. He approached her and said:

"Madam, I take back my words. I beg your pardon for having uttered them. I will beg it on my bent knee to content you. Forgive me, and consider my rash words unsaid."

"Indeed, I know not how to forgive you."

"But when penitence is professed and forgiveness asked it is a Christian's duty to extend it," said Dick, appealing to her conscience.

"Admit, then, that your words—the injurious epithets you dared to apply to my husband—were untrue."

"Do *you*, who have so much trust in him, need to be assured that they were untrue?" inquired Dick, evasively.

"No, indeed, I do not. I know that Alexander Lyon is the very soul of honor."

Dick bowed deeply and a little ironically, saying:

"But you require a fuller apology than I have yet made?"

"I do."

"Well, I make it. I feel very sorry that I forgot myself so far as to use those terms in respect to the gentleman in question. I take them back unreservedly, and I beg you, as you are a Christian, to forgive me."

She bowed, still a little coldly, and then said:

"Sir, I know that you have come here this morning if not directly from my husband, at least in his interests, or upon his affairs. If you are an authorized agent, pray explain the nature of the business that has brought you here."

Under the forced calmness of her words he perceived that a terrible anxiety was torturing her soul. He answered gently:

"Madam, yes, I come here on his affairs and in his interests, since it is certainly important to him that he be prevented from taking a certain step that he contemplates."

"What step is that?" she breathlessly inquired.

"Will you permit me first to see you into the house? The explanation I have to make is not a pleasant one, and you are already something overcome by what has passed. You had better hear the rest of what I have to say in your own parlor."

Drusilla hesitated. She still resented the words he had used in reference to her husband, although he had recanted and begged pardon; and for this reason she shrank from taking him across the threshold of her house. But she reflected that, as he had assured her he came upon Alexander's affairs and in his interests, she could do no less than open her doors to his entrance.

"Come, then," she said, rising and leading the way into the cottage.

She walked very fast, her impatience overcoming her weariness.

She showed him into the drawing-room and signed him into a seat, and sank herself down on a corner of the sofa, for she was quite out of breath.

"Now, now, Mr. Hammond." she exclaimed, as soon as she could articulate the words. "Explain yourself! I know well, I knew from the first, that you did not come here for the sole purpose of making me a call. I feel now that the nature of your errand is painful. Tell it at once. You must know that anything is better than suspense."

Dick attempted to answer, but looked in her face and failed. It was as hard to obey her as it would have been to gaze in the eyes of a lamb and slay it.

"Still silent?" she said, clasping her hands. "Oh. Heaven, do not torture me so! I have suffered so much already! so much, just Lord! I can bear no more! Tell me your worst news at once, and kill me with it. It would be mercy."

Still, still, Dick's answer, like Macbeth's amen, "stuck ln his throat."

"Oh, Heaven, what is this? Why don't you speak? Alick! Alick! my husband! You said that he was well! Yes, you said so! But they say of the *dead* that they are well!" she cried, clasping her hands, and in her excessive alarm forgetting that Dick had certainly, in the early part of their interview, spoken of Alick as a living man about to take an objectionable step.

Her complexion curdled into white and livid spots, her features quivered with the intense agony of suspense, as she stretched out her hands and gasped forth the word:

"Tell—tell—is Alick—DEAD?"

"No!" thundered Dick, emphatically, as he found his

voice, "he is not! No such good luck. The rope is not ready for him yet," he added, under his breath.

She heard only the first words of his reply.

"Thank Heaven for that, at least. It is well to know that. I think now I can bear everything else," she sighed, as the tension of her nerves relaxed, and she sank down among the cushions and closed her eyes. This reaction from her illogical but deadly terror was so great, that she nearly swooned. And now to feel certain that he was alive and well seemed all sufficient for her satisfaction.

Dick did not disturb her by a word, look, or gesture. He was pleased to put off the evil hour of explanation as long as possible, even if it were to be forever; and he mentally bemoaned the hardship of the duty he felt compelled to do, and he wished himself anywhere else but where he was.

In a few minutes Drusilla recovered herself, and with an effort sat up and said:

"Mr. Hammond, you assure me that my husband is alive and well; as indeed I ought to have known from your previous conversation; only that in my sudden alarm I did not remember it. I am not very rational, I think. But now that my fears for his safety are set at rest, I do not dread to hear any other ill news that you may have to tell me. So speak out freely and without fear for me. I am strong enough to sustain the shock of common calamities," she added, with a smile.

And in saying these words, she only thought of Mr. Lyon's supposed lawsuit, "connected with his late father's will," and she fancied that Dick had come to tell her of its failure.

"Then I will do so, Mrs. Lyon—Drusilla! I wish you would let me call you so, as I used to do when you were a little child," said Dick, gently and gravely.

"You may call me anything that my husband may permit, Mr. Hammond. But until you have his sanction you must call me Mrs. Lyon."

"Ah, my dear child," said Dick mournfully, "I fear that is the very last name he will be willing to accord you."

"What is that you say, sir? What do you mean?" questioned Drusilla, in a low, breathless, hurried tone, as with his words there rushed upon her mind the recollec-

tion of her husband's cruel letter, in which he had declared his union with her to be illegal, null and void, and to have always been so. And now she instantly connected Hammond's visit and his untold news with that letter and its cruel communications. And she wondered if Dick knew anything about Alick's supposed monomania; and if so whether he rightly understood it, or whether he was misled by it.

As Dick did not immediately answer her questions, she spoke to him again.

"Why do you not reply to me, Mr. Hammond?"

"Ah, my poor child! my dear child! you readily surmised that I had painful matters to communicate, but you never divined how painful," said Dick, sorrowfully.

"You alarm me again. For Heaven's sake, speak and shorten this torture," she pleaded.

"You believe yourself to be the wife of Alexander Lyon?" said Dick, modulating his voice to a tone of the deepest and most respectful sympathy.

"'*Believe*,' sir? I am so," answered Drusilla drawing herself up with a proud and confident smile.

"I feel assured that you think as you say. My long knowledge of you, my earnest esteem for you will not permit me to question your good faith. But my poor Drusilla, my dear girl, I fear, I greatly fear that you are mistaken."

"I am not, sir. I cannot be mistaken on such a subject," answered Drusilla. And as all the deep dishonor implied in the doubt rushed over her mind, her face and neck were suffused with the crimson flush of wounded delicacy and offended pride, and she added, "You must know, sir, that to question my wifehood is to insult me."

"Heaven is my witness, how far from my heart is the wish to offend you, how profound and respectful is my sympathy for you, and how deeply it pains me to give you pain. But I must do my duty. Most willingly would I have avoided this task, if I could have done so; but I could not. And I come to serve and to save you, and one who is dearer to me than all others besides," said Dick earnestly.

"I think I know why you speak to me in this manner. You have suffered yourself to be misled by the transient

imaginings of a monomaniac, who is so sane on all other subjects, and with one exception so strong and clear in judgment and understanding, that you have failed to discover his hallucination to be what it is. But I will soon convince you that it is *you* who are mistaken, and not I," replied Drusilla with much dignity.

And she drew from her bosom the little black silk bag, took from it the small piece of paper and placed it in the hands of her visitor, saying:

"There, Mr. Hammond, read that, and confess that you have alarmed yourself for nothing."

Dick, who had been listening to her and watching her in wonder and curiosity, took the paper, and with a bow, began to examine it. As he read it slowly and attentively, he gathered his brows into a thoughtful and troubled frown, and as he finished it, he looked at her with a compassionate expression and inquired:

"My dear child, how came this little document into your keeping?"

"I found it while clearing out Alick's dressing-glass drawer. And as it was as much mine as his, and as he did not seem to set much value on it, judging by the place in which he left it, I took possession of it. And I am very glad now that I have it to show you," she answered, smiling confidently.

"Because you consider it a proof positive of your marriage?" he inquired, gravely.

"Why, of course. And so it is," she exclaimed, triumphantly. "Why, look at it! Read it! It is quite plain and conclusive! A child could comprehend it! Don't you see for yourself that this is the most positive proof of my marriage that could possibly be produced?"

"No, Drusilla," he answered, mournfully, "I see nothing of the sort. Quite the contrary."

"Then you don't understand English when you see it!" retorted the sorely tried young creature, losing a little of her saintly patience.

"I understand *this*, but too well!" replied Dick, grimly regarding the document that he still held in his hand.

"In mercy's name, what do you mean now?"

"I mean that this piece of paper proves no marriage. It only indicates that at the time of its being filled out,

Lyon probably had sincere intention to marry you. But so far from its being a proof of your marriage, as it lies here before us, it affords an incontrovertible evidence that no such marriage ever took place!"

"Come! what next, I wonder? Are you also a monomaniac on this subject? And is madness infectious? If so, pray leave my presence before you inoculate me with the same mania!"

"I would to Heaven that you were right and that I were talking at random! But it is not so, Drusilla! 'I speak the words of truth and soberness.' This document proves that you were never married," said Hammond, with as much earnestness as sadness.

"You are raving! In the name of reason how can you talk so frantically? *That* paper, of all things in the world, proves I never was married? Can *any* thing in the universe prove that I was never married, when I know I was? I am not a fool, or a lunatic, or a visionary, to imagine things that never happened. I saw and heard myself married to Alick by a regularly ordained minister, with a special license, and in the presence of a dozen witnesses. You talk wildly, Mr. Hammond! Yes, and very offensively!" she added.

"I beg you to forgive me and to bear with me, Drusilla," he answered sadly, "but——"

"Call me by my husband's name! I have a right to it!" interrupted the young matron, proudly, but mournfully.

"Yes, Heaven knows that you *have* a right to it! The holiest, if not the most lawful right, and I cannot refuse it to you. But, Mrs. Lyon, as I told you, I came here to serve and to save *you*, if possible, and also one who is dearest of all to me; so in her service and in yours I must convince you of the truth of what I have just said, however distressing it may be for me to press, or for you to believe," said Dick, solemnly.

The earnestness and solemnity of his words deeply impressed her. And new terror struck all the color from her face—doubt, like the iron, entered her soul. She gazed at him transfixed.

"It is so," said Hammond, turning away his eyes that he might not meet the agonizing appeal in hers. "It is

so. You *ought* to be, but you are *not* the wife of Alexander Lyon."

"Not his wife—not Alick's wife! Oh, Alick, Alick! my own! my dear! my love! my husband! I *am* your wife, I am—I am!" cried the wronged and wretched young creature, with a sob and a gasp, as she sank back among her cushions.

Dick could have wept for company, but he only cursed Alick and pitied her, while he watched and waited for her to recover herself.

Ah! how many tears she had shed in her short married life of less than a year!

Presently her anguish broke forth in a sharp and bitter cry:

"Why, oh why, do you say such terrible things to me, Mr. Hammond?"

"Because it is absolutely necessary that you should know them," he answered, kindly.

"Have you no pity—*none*—that you drive this sorrow like a sword into my heart?" she cried.

"Heaven knows how much pity and how much respect I have for you," he said.

"Oh, what—oh what," she sobbed, wringing her hands in her agony, "oh, what makes you say that I am not his wife—not my dear Alick's wife? When I told you—*I told you* how I was married; with a special license, by a regularly-ordained minister, and in the presence of a dozen witnesses? How *can* you say, in the face of all this, that I am not Alick's wife?"

"My dear Drusilla, on my honor as a gentleman, by my knowledge as a lawyer, and on my faith as a Christian, I assure you, that though your nuptial ceremony had been pronounced by a bishop, and in the presence of a thousand witnesses, the very existence of this little document as it lies before us proves that ceremony to have been illegal and of no effect."

She clasped her hands and gazed on him with such a look of unutterable woe in her face, that he could no more bear to meet her eyes than could the heroes of old endure Medusa's glance and live. Yet withal she was now very calm, though with a calmness that was but a restrained frenzy; but it must have deceived Dick as to her

powers of endurance, or he would not have driven this spear home to her heart as in a few moments he did.

"And Alick knew this?" she asked.

"I am not sure he knew it or thought of it on the wedding-day. But I am sure that he knows it now," sighed Dick.

"And so his fancy was a fact after all; and he was no monomaniac?"

"No, he was no monomaniac," said Dick. "He was only a scoundrel," he added, under his breath.

"Alick knows this! Then this is the discovery he made in March?"

"Probably, if he made any."

"He told me he had discovered then our marriage was not legal. He has absented himself from me ever since. Heaven help me! I thought he was suffering from a hallucination that would pass away. And it was a reality!"

"Yes, it was," said Dick, wondering at her apparent composure and misled by it.

"But Alick will remedy the evil now. He will marry me over again. You know he will, Mr. Hammond?"

"I know he ought to do so; I know he is bound by the holiest obligations that can bind a man to do so; I know if he had one spark of honor in him he *would* do so but I do not believe he will," growled Dick.

"How dare you say that?"

"Because if he had the slightest intention of doing you justice, he would never even dream of the step he is now actually about to take, and of which I came here on purpose to warn you."

"What step? You said something of this when you first arrived. What is it?"

"A step which (were you his wife, as you ought in justice to be) would take him across the threshold of a State's prison, for it would be a felony," answered Hammond, speaking distinctly and emphatically, and hoping that she would understand him, and save him the pain of a more particular explanation.

But she did not even suspect his meaning. She only clasped her hands, and gazed at him with piteous and beseeching eyes, and murmured:

"What is it? Speak plainly."

He turned away his head that he might not witness her despair, as he replied:

"He is about to take advantage of the discovery he has made by marrying Miss Anna Ly——"

His words were cut short by a piercing shriek that rang like the cry of a lost soul through the air. He started up and confronted Drusilla.

She was standing before him, in motionless, speechless anguish. Her face was blanched to the hue of death, her eyes were dilated, and strained, her hands were extended, her form rigid. As one struck with catalepsy, for a moment she stood thus, and then fell.

Hammond caught her before she struck the floor, and laid her tenderly on the sofa, and then in great alarm, he rang for assistance.

Her servants were at that hour gathered around the kitchen table eating their dinner, and talking of the strange visitor whom they had all seen enter the house in company with their mistress. They heard the shriek that rang through the air, followed by the loud peals of the parlor-bell, and they started up in a body and ran to see what the matter could be.

They found their mistress in a swoon on the sofa, and a strange gentleman standing over her, beside himself with fear and grief.

"For Heaven's sake do something. I fear Mrs. Lyon is dying or dead!" he exclaimed.

"What caused it, sir?" demanded "mammy," putting aside the intruder, and kneeling down to examine her patient.

"I was so unhappy as to be the bearer of bad news to her," Dick confessed.

"Then, sir, you ought to a-knowed better than for to a-told it to her in her state of health. It may a-killed her," said the nurse severely, as is the custom of her class in rebuking the common enemy.

Dick looked guilty and wretched.

Pina pitied him.

"No, mammy, it ain't killed her—she ain't dead; 'deed she ain't, mammy. She's only in one of her fainty fits She's subject to 'em, mammy," said the girl.

"You hold your tongue, gal. What do you know? Come here and help me to rub her hands. And Mr. Leo, you go 'bout your business. What call you go to be poking 'round where there's a lady sick? And *you*, sir," said mammy, turning to the unhappy Dick, "now you's done all the harm you can do, you go 'way too."

Dick turned a long, lingering look to the inanimate form on the sofa, and then reluctantly followed his companion in banishment from the room.

When they reached the hall, Leo politely opened the front door for the exit of the visitor.

But Dick loitered.

"Come here, boy," he said, beckoning Leo close to his side. "Is your mistress really subject to these swooning fits?"

"Yes, sir; and so has been ever since master took to his ways," answered the boy, sulkily, because for the time being he hated all mankind, and, most of all, his master, for his mistress's sake.

"What ways?" asked Dick.

"Gentleman's ways, sir," growled Leo.

"But—she gets over these attacks?" asked Dick, anxiously.

The boy looked at the questioner askance, and answered ironically:

"No, sir; slight as they is, she allus dies of 'em."

Dick smiled, even in the midst of his trouble, and said:

"Come, I pardon your impertinence for the sake of the regard that I see you bear your mistress. Don't mock me again, but answer me truly—these swoons are not dangerous, are they?"

"Well, sir, I don't think they is. The women allus gets her out of 'em in an hour or so," said Leo, somewhat mollified by the sincere interest this stranger took in his mistress.

"Well, my boy, when your mistress is quite well, say to-morrow morning, if she is well enough to be up, I wish you to give her this packet," said Dick offering Leo a large, long, well-filled yellow envelope.

Leo backed several paces, and put his hands behind him.

"What's that for?" inquired the visitor "Why don't you take this?"

"Is it a writ?" asked the boy.

Dick laughed now.

"No, stupid! I have been more used to having writs served upon *me*, than to serving them upon *others*. Do I look like a bum baillie?"

"No, sir."

"Well, then, take this and give it to your mistress when she gets better."

But the boy backed farther and kept his hands behind him.

"Are you crazy?" asked Dick, impatiently.

"No, sir: but I want to know what is in that there yaller hang-wallop, before I tetches of it to take it to my mist'ess, 'cause she's been put upon bad enough a'ready, the dear knows," said Leo, stubbornly.

Mr. Hammond good-humoredly opened the yellow envelope, and for the boy's satisfaction displayed its contents, which consisted of two open letters, one sealed letter and a newspaper.

"There," he said, as he replaced them, "you see there is nothing very dangerous in the packet. It is for your mistress's benefit that I wish to send it."

"Well, sir, I'll take it to her; and I hope, sir, you'll 'scuse me for hanging back and doubting," said Leo.

"Certainly; I respect your scruples, and I like you all the better for your fidelity to your mistress. And now, listen. I want you to do something else for me."

"Yes, sir."

"You know the 'Drovers' Rest?'"

"Is it that little shady inn on the road, just before you turn into our woods, sir?"

"The very same; it is the only inn within half a mile. I shall wait there until evening to hear how your mistress is. Do you think you can slip across there to bring me news of her this afternoon?"

"I'll try, sir—yes, sir, I'll come, sir," said the boy, first hesitating, and then consenting.

"Thank you. Don't forget to do so," said Mr. Hammond, dropping a small gold coin into Leo's hand, and then hurrying from the house.

CHAPTER XLI.

PROOFS.

Concealment is no more ; facts speak
All circumstance that may compel
Full credence to the tale they tell,
And now her tortured heart and ear,
Hath nothing more to feel, or hear.—BYRON.

It was long, very long, before the most strenuous and persevering efforts of her servants could bring the stricken and unconscious sufferer back to consciousness. As always before, the return to sensibility was but the return to sorrow. But the nurse prepared a dose of morphine, and, murmuring to her of her babe, persuaded her to take it. And soon she was buried in the blessed oblivion of sleep.

Leo sat over the kitchen fire, wishing himself a man and a white man, that he might avenge the wrongs of his worshiped mistress. In his small way, very much as the child Willie Douglas felt towards the beautiful and discrowned Mary Stuart, felt this poor fellow towards the wronged lady of his own allegiance. Late in the evening to him, sitting there, came Pina.

"Well, and how is she now?" inquired the boy.

"Gone to bed. Mammy give her something to put her to sleep. Mammy knows what to do. My goodness, Leo what a blessing it is that we fetched mammy to her!"

"Yes, indeed, that it was, Pina."

"And now you clear out here. I want to get some supper ready for mammy to eat. She hasn't had no dinner, nor even a mortal bite since breakfast. My gracious, what a tiresome thing it is to have a house always upside down like ours. Just as if there was a somebody a being buried or a being borned every day in the week! and all on account of that man! Yes, I *will* call him 'that man,' if I'm hashed for it!—that man! that man! that man! there, now! And I don't see no use no men ever is, 'cept 'tis to make a fuss in the family! And I know as the Lord made the wimmin; but I b'lieve in my heart and soul

the debil made all the men, jest to spile the Lord's work. And I wish there wasn't a man in the world, 'cept 'tis *you* Leo, and Cousin Charley, and daddy! So there, now. And now why don't you go 'bout your business and leave me room to move 'round the range and get supper?"

Leo, with a certain sense of shame in belonging to that offending and proscribed sex created by the devil for the confusion of the world, gladly took himself out of the kitchen and went to keep his appointment with his fellow sinner.

He found Mr. Richard Hammond in the little back parlor of the suburban inn.

Dick was seated at a table; with writing materials, and also, alas! with brandy, tobacco and pipes before him.

"Your mistress? I hope she is better?" exclaimed Dick, eagerly, on seeing his messenger.

"Yes, sir; the wimmin, they have fetched her out'n her fainty fit all right, and they have put her to sleep comfortable," replied the boy.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed Dick.

"Well, sir, that is all I have to tell you; and now, as I may be missed, I think I had better hurry back," said Leo.

"Wait; here is a letter I wish you to take to your mistress."

"Another one, sir?" inquired the boy, distrustfully.

"Yes; but *this* letter is to prepare her for the receipt of the packet. I wish you to give her *this* letter *first.* And after she has read it, hand her the packet."

"Yes, sir."

"And here is your reward," said Mr. Hammond, putting a piece of gold in the boy's hand.

"If you please, sir, I don't like to take any pay for serving of her," said Leo, hesitatingly.

"Nonsense! Take it for serving me, then," laughed Dick, forcing the money upon the youth.

Leo pocketed the fee, and hurried home.

It was quite dark when he reached the house.

All that night mammy sat up and watched by the bedside of her charge. Drusilla slept soundly and late.

All dreaded her awakening. But to the surprise and relief of her attendants, she awoke quite calmly; though

whether her quietude was the lethargy produced by the continued influence of the morphine, or whether it was the apathy of despair, it was hard to tell. She permitted the nurse to bathe her face and hands, and to smooth her hair. She partook slightly of the light breakfast that was brought her. But beyond these she scarcely moved, looked or spoke. After an hour or two she intimated that she would rise; and, with the assistance of her nurse, she got up, dressed herself, and went to her easy-chair. And there she sat, pale, mute, and still as death.

"Mammy," whispered Pina, "speak to her- -make her talk. Indeed it scares me all but to death to see her that a-way."

"Hush," muttered the nurse, "let her alone. 'It's ill waking sleeping dogs'—which I mean to say, long as she's quiet be thankful for it, and don't 'sturb her."

"But I'd rather see her cry, and scream, and rave, than see her so."

"That's because you's a fool; for I hadn't, and that's a fact, in her sitivation, too! Go 'long, gal; what you know?"

Meanwhile, Leo watched for an opportunity to execute the commission entrusted to him. He did not find one until the afternoon, when mammy and Pina being seated at their early dinner, sent Leo with an armful of wood up to the lady's chamber to replenish the fire.

When the boy had done that duty, swept up the hearth, and replaced the shovel and tongs, he turned to where his mistress sat, in her chair, pale, silent, and motionless as a statue, and he drew the letter from his pocket, and offered her, saying, respectfully:

"From the gentleman who was here yesterday, ma'am."

Drusilla mechanically took the letter, and stared blankly at the boy for a moment.

"Where did you get this?" she inquired, as she broke the seal; and her voice sounded strangely to her attendant as she asked the question.

"From the gentleman who was here yesterday, ma'am, as I said," repeated Leo.

"Is he here to-day?"

"No, ma'am."

"When then did you get this?"

"Yesterday, ma'am, before he left the neighborhood," answered the boy.

Drusilla read the letter. It was directed very formally to Mrs. Alexander Lyon, Cedarwood Cottage. It ran thus:

DROVERS' REST, Tuesday Evening.

MY DEAREST LADY.—As the executioner, kneeling, begs pardon of the victim he is about to slay, so humbly at your feet I would implore forgiveness for the blow I am fated to strike you, as well as for all the pain I have already been forced to give you. But after having stated some strange facts to you, I feel bound to prove the truth of my statement. The bearer of this will also deliver to you certain papers, to which I beg leave to call your particular attention. Your own pure spirit will teach you how to act in the premises. And now, my dear Mrs. Lyon, I cannot close this letter without entreating you to remember, and to take comfort in the remembrance, that in this great trial of yours you are only the sufferer, not the sinner; that in the judgment of all good and honorable people you will be held blameless. And as for myself, here in all honesty of purpose, as in the sight of Heaven, I offer you my utmost services. All that a brother might do for a beloved sister, or a father for an idolized daughter in her distress, I will do for you. I and all I possess shall be at your commands; and my business and my pleasure shall at any time give way to your requirements of me. A letter directed to me at the general post-office, Washington, will always find me, wherever I may be, and always as

Your respectful friend,

RICHARD HAMMOND.

Drusilla read this letter, and with a sigh, but without a syllable, she laid it aside, and held out her hand to Leo, saying:

"Give me the other papers."

The boy drew from his pocket the large, yellow envelope, and delivered it to her.

She opened it and emptied out its contents. The first that caught her eye was a newspaper with a marked passage in it. She took it up. It was the *Valley Courier*, a little local journal published in the county town near

the country-seat of General Lyon. And the marked passage was as follows:

MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.—We understand that Alexander Lyon Esq., of Crow Wood, only son and heir of the late eminent Chief Justice of that name, is about to lead to the hymeneal altar his cousin, the beautiful and accomplished Anna, the granddaughter and sole heiress of the veteran General Lyon, of Old Lyon Hall and of Revolutionary celebrity. The engagement has been of long standing, the nuptials having been twice arrested by the hand of death. Now, however, we are happy to learn that, both at Crow Wood, the seat of the bridegroom, and at Old Lyon Hall, the home of the bride, the most splendid preparations are on foot in honor of the joyful occasion.

Drusilla read this article and, without a word of comment, a movement of feature, or a change of color, she put it down and took up a letter with a broken seal. She unfolded and read it. It was from General Lyon to Richard Hammond.

OLD LYON HALL, Nov. 1, 18—,

MY DEAR DICK:—Alick and Anna are to be married on Thursday, the fifteenth instant. And now, my dear boy, I wish you, with your accustomed frankness and good humor, to "let bygones be bygones," and to come down and be present at the wedding. I know it will be painful to you; but brave men do not shrink from pain. And, Dick, you know that there are but four of us left out of all the old stock—Dick, Alick, Anna and me. I have long passed the threescore and ten years allotted as the natural term of a man's life, and so may daily look for my summons hence. Dick, Alick and Anna seem to me as my own children. Dick, you have never in your life pleased me with one single sight of your face at Old Lyon Hall. I know why you have kept away, my boy. But now I trust you will conquer your reluctance and come, rather than grieve the soul of

Your loving uncle,

LEONARD LYON.

Still without a syllable of complaint, or a variation of complexion, she let this letter flutter down from her hand, and she raised the sole remaining one.

This was a sealed envelope, directed to herself. She broke the seal and found an old and closely written communication from General Lyon to Richard Hammond, which it is unnecessary to give here at length. It was very necessary, however, for Drusilla's knowledge of the whole truth that she should read every line of it. So at least thought Dick, and therefore he had sent it to her with the others, but *sealed*, lest other eyes should see its meaning. In this letter General Lyon spoke of the long season in Washington during which himself, Alick, Anna and Dick were always together. And thus Drusilla, for the first time, learned the true nature of that "business connected with his late father's will," which had taken Alexander daily and nightly from her side. And now she discovered the double dealing and the deep dishonor of the man she called her husband.

She dropped this last letter, and it fell at her feet. Her face turned no paler, because in fact it was already as pale as it could possibly be, and had not a vestige of color to lose.

She had already suffered so much, so much that it seemed impossible for her to suffer more. Blow after blow had fallen with cruel weight upon her young heart, until it seemed benumbed.

Besides, what had she learned now worse than that which she had known and wept for many days—his treachery to her? Only through the numbness of her heart and the dulness of her head, one feeling and one thought clearly and strongly moved—that his marriage with Miss Lyon must be arrested and he himself saved from this last culmination of his criminal career.

The extremity of sorrow, when it does not destroy life or reason, always strengthens the character. Such must have been its effect upon Drusilla to enable her to rise above her misery and her weakness, with the fixed determination to go in person to Old Lyon Hall, for the purpose of preventing that "MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE" which the *Valley Courier* had announced to the world with such a grand flourish of editorial trumpets.

CHAPTER XLII.

DRUSILLA'S DESTINATION.

One human hand my own to take,
  One human heart my own to raise,
One loving human voice to break
  The silence of my days.

Saviour, if this wild prayer be wrong
  And what I seek I may not find,
Oh, make more hard, and stern, and strong
  The frame-work of my mind!—OWEN MEREDITH.

HAVING finished reading all the letters and papers that had been submitted to her examination, in proof of the perfidy of her husband, Drusilla sat on, for a few moments, pale, still, and mute. She would not weep now—the fountain of her tears was dry at last. She could scarcely feel—her heart was stunned almost to insensibility.

Now she knew the very worst. Now she could not doubt that her husband had deserted her and that he meditated the crime of marriage with his cousin Anna.

Yes, the crime!

For, notwithstanding all that Richard Hammond had said and thought to the contrary, she knew that she herself not only ought to have been in right—but really was, in fact—the true wife of Alexander Lyon; and that it was but a slight legal informality, unsuspected by her and even by him at the time of their marriage, of which he was now about to avail himself in breaking the sacred bonds that bound him to his young wife, in order to unite himself to his wealthy cousin. She knew that this intended act would be a sin, and she feared that it might be construed into a felony. There was an ugly word in the dictionary called "bigamy," and its penalty was uglier still—the State's prison. To save Alexander in his moral insanity, from such guilt and such degradation, she resolved to go to Old Lyon Hall and stop the intended marriage, even though the adventure should cost her her life.

"And the wedding is to be celebrated on the evening of the fifteenth, and this was the morning of the fourteenth, and I have but little more than twenty-four hours to do all that must be done to save him!" she said, speaking her mind aloud, to the infinite surprise and alarm of Leo, who was still standing before her and who now looked as if he thought his mistress had gone crazy,—and "well she might," he said to himself, as he gazed on her where she sat with her hands clasped to her temples.

Drusilla reflected intently for a few moments. There were several ways of reaching Old Lyon Hall,—one was to go by steamer down the Potomac to Chesapeake Bay and up James River to the Stormy Petrel landing, and then by turnpike to the Porcupine Mountain; another was to take the railway train from Alexandria to Richmond, and then the stage-coach across the country. Both these routes were favored by the Lyon family when they had leisure and were traveling for recreation. But both required two days of travel.

Drusilla saw that she must take the third, which was the shortest if the roughest route—the old line of stage-coaches running between Washington city and Western Virginia. It is true this road was very dangerous, especially at night. It crossed the Blue Ridge, the Shenandoah, and the Alleghany mountains. It wound around terrible heights where there were many hundred feet of perpendicular rock above and below, with little width of way between. Once in a while you heard of a coach being crushed by the fall of the rocks from above, or dashed to pieces by going over the side of the precipice. Upon the whole this was not a favored route with travelers who could avoid it. But Drusilla resolved to take it because it was the shortest to her place of destination, and in less than twenty-four hours it would take her to a little mountain hamlet within ten miles of Old Lyon Hall. True, she might meet with an accident on the road, but if she should lose her life she might serve Alick by that means as well or better than by preventing his marriage with Anna, since if she (Drusilla) were dead, that marriage would be no longer criminal.

"Leo," she inquired, looking up at the anxious boy, "what is the hour?"

Leo glanced at the ormolu clock on the mantelpiece, and answered:

"It is nearly one, ma'am."

"Do you know what time the night-coach for Western Virginia leaves Washington?"

"I don't know what time it leaves Washington, ma'am, but it passes through Alexandry at five."

"Then it must start at about three or half past. Leo! hurry down-stairs; tell your mother and Pina to come to me immediately. Then go to the stable and put the horses to the carriage, and prepare yourself to drive me to town, and be as quick as you possibly can; do you hear?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered the amazed boy, making his awkward bow, and going on his errand.

Drusilla, with a marvellous new life in her system, arose and went to her bureau drawers and began hastily to select certain indispensable conveniences for her journey, and to pack them into a traveling bag.

Ah! at that moment, and under those circumstances what painful feelings that pretty Turkey morocco bag awakened; for "sorrow's crown of sorrow is the memory of happier days."

The bag had been given to her first, by old Mrs. Lyon, when that lady had hoped to take her favorite down to Old Lyon Hall to the wedding of Alick and Anna. And well Drusilla remembered how much she was pleased with the gift that combined beauty with utility; how much she admired its construction, with its various pockets and recesses for the reception of all sorts of traveling necessaries. But she never went down to that wedding, which never took place, as you already know.

Next, nearly two years afterward, she had packed this very bag for her journey to meet Alick and to be married to him herself.

And now she was packing it to go and prevent his marriage with his cousin. Truly, the little bag was associated with weddings for good or ill.

While Drusilla was stowing away combs, brushes, soap, cologne, napkins, handkerchiefs, chamber-slippers, etc, into her traveling-bag, and reflecting on all its happy and unhappy associations, she was interrupted by the hasty entrance of Pina and Pina's mammy, both with their eyes

wide open in astonishment; for Leo had startled them both with the announcement that his mistress had ordered the carriage quite suddenly to go the city.

"And now, ma'am, what is all this, to be sure?" inquired "mammy," with the authority, not to say the insolence, belonging even to the best of her sisterhood.

"What is what, nurse?" questioned Drusilla, with calm dignity.

"That boy—which I believe he's lying, and if he is I will chastise him well for it—says how you has ordered the carriage to go to Washington immediate; which I know, ma'am, you would never think of doing nothing so unprudent; and I'll give it to Leo, well for scaring of me with his lies."

"Leo has told you no falsehood. I have ordered the carriage to take me to the city," said Drusilla, calmly.

"Well, ma'am, I hope you'll follow my 'vice and think better of it, and do no such indiscreet thing," said mammy grimly.

"I have no choice, nurse. This is not with me a matter of will, but of necessity. I must go to Washington to take the night coach for Western Virginia."

At this announcement, mammy stared for a moment in speechless consternation. Then lifting both her hands, she exclaimed:

"To take the night coach for Wes' Wirginy! Well, Lord! And is you crazy?"

"No, not crazy; though I know how strange my purpose must seem to you," answered Drusilla, quietly, as she folded some white linen collars, and placed them in her bag.

"And DOES you know the dangers?"

"Of the road? Well, I recollect that there was a coach upset on the Hogback Mountain, and nine passengers killed or wounded, only last spring."

"I don't mean the road, though that's as bad as bad can be, to my sartain knowledge, which has traveled of it once. I mean your siteration, there! do you know the dangers of *that*, a bumping and a thumping, and a tumbling and a rumbling over them rocky roads? I say, do you know the dangers of *that?*"

"No, I don't, nurse; I only know that whatever they are, I must face them," said Drusilla, so calmly and so

firmly, that the old woman knew at once that it would be utterly vain to try to turn her from her purpose.

"But, for goodness' sake, *why* must you go?"

"From imminent necessity, nurse, that I can't stop now to explain. I wish you to be kind enough to pack up under-clothing and other necessaries enough to last me a week. Pina, empty the little red trunk and bring it here to nurse."

"But, for patience's sake, whar is you going, child?"

"I am going to see my husband."

"You are going to your death!"

"Perhaps. If so, I shall serve him just as well," murmured Drusilla, in a low tone.

"But, child, tell me, what's the great 'cessity? What for must you go to see your husband sich a long distance over sich roads in your siteration, and to the rist of your life?"

"He is—in imminent danger," said Drusilla, evasively.

"Lor! and that was the bad news as that gentleman brought you?"

"Yes, it was."

"And it overcomed you so! Well, Lord! to think of the tender heart! But what is the matter of him, honey? —pleurisy, I shouldn't wonder! That's most in general what ails people this time of the year. Is it pleurisy, honey?"

"No, not that; but do not stop now to ask questions. I have no time to answer them. Here is Pina with the trunk. And here are my keys. Go to my wardrobes and bureaus, and select what is needful for my journey. And pray be quick about it, for I have no time to lose."

"Well, but honey, hear me for one minute first. It may be that he is very ill, but he may get over it, 'out your gwine to see him. Yes, and if you go, he may get well and you may die. And anyway, I don't see the use of two lives and maybe three lives risted instead of one. Take my 'vice, honey, and stay quietly at home."

"Nurse, listen. I should suffer a thousand times more in *mind* to stay here, than I possibly could to go the journey that I have fully resolved to take," said Drusilla.

"Well, honey, in either case your life must be risted, I suppose; and of course you have got a right to take

your choice *how* it shall be risted. So now, all I got to do is to make your journey as comfor'ble as I can."

"Thank you. That is indeed all that you can do," said Drusilla.

"But mind, honey, *I gwine long with you*," said mammy, with grim resolution.

"You? You going, nurse? I have not asked you!" exclaimed Drusilla, in astonishment.

"No, honey, you haven't axed me; which I believe you never even thought of so doing. But if you must travel —by night, too—surely you'd never think of traveling alone in your state of health."

"That is true—I never thought of it."

"Which it seems to me you never do think of yourself, honey."

"But it is a hard journey for you to undertake. Would not Pina do as well to go with me?"

"Hi, honey, what good Pina going to be, case you taken ill on the road? No, child, long as you *will* go, you must consent to take the ole 'oman along to look after you."

"I believe you are right; quite right; and I thank you very much. But now you must let Pina pack that little trunk for me, while you go and get ready to attend me."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And be very quick, nurse. See, it is half-past one. It will take us an hour to ride to Washington, and I wish to be there by three o'clock, so as to make sure of the coach."

"All right, ma'am. I will be ready in half an hour."

And the old woman hurried away, not ill pleased to vary the monotony of her life at Cedarwood by a journey, this fine weather, into the mountainous regions of Virginia. It is true that this was a measure she would not have recommended to her patient; but since that lady was resolved upon it, "mammy" made the best of it, and determined to draw what good she might out of the change of scene and circumstances.

In just ten minutes mammy returned to the room, dressed for her journey, and equipped with a carpet bag that contained all her traveling belongings.

"You have been very quick," said Drusilla, approvingly.

"Yes, honey; which it is my pride and ambition always so to be. I had half an hour; that's thirty minutes —three times ten. The first ten minutes I gives to getting myself ready. Now, the next ten minutes I gives to something else," said mammy, speaking hastily, and *while* speaking, drawing from a closet a small red morocco trunk, which she proceeded to pack with a full supply of body linen and all the necessaries of a baby's first toilet, setting the baby's basket in the tray in the top of the trunk.

"What is all that for?" inquired Drusilla, who was busy hooking up her traveling dress.

"Never you mind, honey. You go on a fixing of yourself, and leave me alone. And there, the second ten minutes is up!" said the old woman, as she fastened down and locked the trunk.

"But what is that for?" persisted Drusilla.

"Lor', honey, does you forget? There's three of us going this journey. And that trunk is for the third one. And now I have got only the last ten minutes left, and I must give that to something else still," said mammy, as she flew down-stairs.

Meanwhile Drusilla, while putting on her cloak, bonnet and gloves, gave Pina many charges about the care of the house, the birds, the dogs, and all the pets of the establishment, which would be in her charge during the absence of the mistress.

And Pina promised the utmost fidelity; but begged her lady to order Leo to sleep in the house, because she, Pina, would be afraid to sleep there alone.

Drusilla had but just promised this, when "mammy" reappeared with a large and well-filled luncheon basket.

"How thoughtful you are. And how thankful I ought to be that I have you to think for me and to take care of me at this crisis," said Drusilla, with feeling.

"Lor', honey, what's the use of my having lived fifty year in this world if I *ain't* thoughtful? And what call you to be thankful to me, for doing of that which it is my bounden duty to do, seeing I'm paid for it?" replied

mammy, laughing, for her spirits were rising with the excitement of the journey before her.

"Ah, nurse, there are some services that cannot be purchased or paid for, and yours are of that sort."

"Not a bit, honey. And now the time is up and we's all ready. And here's everything you can possibly want. And Leo, he told me to tell you as the carriage was waiting."

"Thank you; we will go then."

"Yes, honey—— And, now, Pina, you be good gal and take care of the house while your missus is gone," said the nurse, turning to her daughter.

"Yes, mammy. When will missus be home?"

"When you sees her, you fool; and not a minute sooner. And mind you have everything ready for her when she comes; fire made in her room and all, mind that, or it will be the worse for you."

"Yes, mammy."

Drusilla gave a last glance around the room, so full of pleasing and painful memories—the room which she felt she might never see again; and then, silently commending herself to Providence, she left it and led the way down-stairs.

The carriage stood ready; the luggage was piled on behind. Leo had the door open and the steps down. Drusilla entered, followed by her nurse. Both took a kind last leave of Pina, who thrust her head and hands in at the window for the purpose. And Leo cracked his whip and started his horses.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE DREARY NIGHT RIDE.

Her brain is sick with thinking,
Her heart is almost sinking,
She cannot look before her,
On the evil haunted way;
Uphold her, oh! restore her!
Thou Lord of life and day.—MONCTON MILNES.

A FEW minutes after three o'clock, the carriage containing Drusilla and her attendant stopped before the office

of the Washington and Western Virginia line of stage coaches.

In great anxiety, Drusilla drew up the carriage curtain and looked out of the window.

There was no sign of a coach near the office.

"It is gone, it is gone," she cried, clasping her hands in despair. "It is gone and I know I can never reach the place in time to save him!"

"Now don't you take on so, ma'am, that's a dear child. The coach mayn't have come yet, much less gone," said mammy, soothingly.

Meanwhile the porters about the office had come forward and commenced unstrapping the baggage from behind.

Leo jumped off his seat and came and opened the carriage door and let down the steps.

"Is it any use to alight, Leo? Is not the coach gone?" sighed the lady.

"Lor', no, ma'am—it haven't gone out of the stable yet. We've lots of time."

"Oh, thank heaven!" exclaimed Drusilla, in a tone of great relief.

Mammy gathered up her carpet bag, umbrella and big shawl—all carried for her mistress's accommodation and not for her own—and prepared to alight.

"Here, boy, you let me get out first, so I can help the madam," she said, handing a part of her paraphernalia to her son, and then clumsily but safely tumbling herself down to the sidewalk.

"Take care, mammy," said the boy, when all the danger was over.

"Now, that job's done? I'm allus thankful when I can get out'n a carriage without hurting of myself or breaking anything. And now, honey, let me help *you* out. Be careful, child," she said, holding her arms forth to receive her charge.

"Stand aside, please," smiled Drusilla; and then, rather than avail herself of mammy's dangerous assistance, she alighted without aid, and immediately entered the office, calling Leo to attend her.

Seeing a lady's waiting-room back of the office, she gave her purse to Leo, telling him to go to the clerk and secure

their seats; but then, as the sudden thought that they might all be already taken flashed into her mind, she hurried after the boy up to the clerk's desk and eagerly inquired:

"Have you any seats left in the coach now about to start?"

"Yes, Miss; lots. We have nine inside, and only one taken."

"Then I will take two at once," said Drusilla, with another sigh of relieved anxiety.

"Four, master, if you please; we'll take four. *All* the back seats and one of the others," said mammy.

"What is that for?" hastily whispered Drusilla.

"'Cause, child, you can't sit up all night. You must lie down, and you must have all the back seats to lie on like a sofy, you know," whispered mammy, in reply.

"How many seats will you take, Miss?" inquired the clerk who had looked on, pen in hand, while this low-toned consultation was going forward.

"Four," answered Drusilla. "And my servant here will settle for them. Come, nurse, leave Leo to finish this business, and attend me to the ladies' room."

"Yes, honey, in one minute. I just want to stop here and see the *back* seats secured all for you, all together, to lie down on. 'Twould be no use for you to have three seats 'stributed all about the coach, for how could you 'cline on them? Leave me to 'range for you, ma'am."

"Very well, nurse, do as you think best," said Drusilla, passing on to the back room.

There was a side window, opening upon an alley leading to the stables where the coaches were kept.

Drusilla perceived this, and seated herself by the window to watch for the coming of the night coach. She was in such a state of feverish anxiety, that she could not rest. True, two great causes of uneasiness were removed. She was in time for the coach, and she could get seats enough; but still, in her eager impatience, she could not be at peace, and she longed to be on her journey, to feel herself whirled swiftly onward towards the place she was so ardently desirous to reach.

Presently she was joined by mammy, who dropped her

fat self down upon a chair, making it creak under her weight, and said, triumphantly:

"Well, honey, it's all right, and you'll travel as easy as if you was a lying on your own sofy! I left that boy Leo to watch the luggidge."

"I am very much obliged to you; but at the same time, if the coach should be full, and any one should want two of my places, they must have them," said Drusilla.

"Must they? What's the use o' our paying for them, if it wasn't to keep out all 'truders that *did* come? If the coach wasn't *going* to be full, we needn't a paid for no extra seats, seeing as we might a had 'em for nothing, ma'am And don't you think so much of other people. Think a little more of yourself, ma'am. Take a *little* bit of pity on yourself, which you never does, though the Lord knows you needs it."

Mammy's discourse was interrupted by music as delightful to the eager ears of Drusilla as the sublimest strains of Handel—the rumbling of the stage-coach as it rolled out of the stable yard, and whirled around the corner and drew up before the office door.

Drusilla was on her feet in an instant.

"Now don't be in such a hurry, ma'am. You be quiet. Bless you, it will be some time yet before it starts. They've got all the luggidge to put up yet. Leo, he'll call us when it's time to get in."

With a sigh Drusilla dropped into her seat. Moments seemed hours, and hours months to her, until she could reach Old Lyon Hall and prevent the consummation of her Alick's meditated crime.

At length the long wished for signal came. Leo looked into the room, touched his hat, and said:

"Coach ready, ma'am."

Drusilla arose in haste and excitement.

Leo loaded himself with the light luggage.

Mammy drew her big blanket shawl about her, and so they went out of the office.

"Leo, my good boy, take great care of yourself and your sister, and of the house and the animals, while I am gone," said the lady.

"Yes, ma'am; you may trust me for that," answered the boy, very earnestly.

"And Leo, mind, go to the office every day; and if you find letters for me, put them in the directed and stamped envelopes I gave you, and post them with your own hand—do you hear?"

"Yes, ma'am, and will be sure to remember," said Leo, almost weeping.

She shook hands with her servant, and sent her love by him to Pina, and bade him good-by.

In another moment Drusilla and her attendant were in the coach—the only passengers there.

Drusilla sat reclining in the corner of the back seat, but mammy, who had not yet seated herself, was fussing about, stowing away such portable luggage as they had brought in their hands.

"There, honey!" she said, as she placed a carpet bag in the other corner of the seat, where her lady sat, and spread a soft shawl doubled over it, "there, that will be a tolerable pillow for you when you want to lay down. And here's another shawl that'll do to spread over you. And I reckon I might's well take the lunching basket and umbrella on to the seat with me. And, dear knows, it looks as if we was agoing to have all the coach to ourselves, any way; so we had no call to pay for so many seats we might a-had for nothing."

While mammy rambled on in this manner, apparently for no other purpose than the pleasure of hearing the sound of her own voice, Drusilla sat gazing out of the window at her own pretty little carriage, with her faithful boy perched upon the coachman's seat. Poor Leo was waiting to see his beloved mistress off before leaving the spot.

"And now let me see—whar shall I put this 'ere bundle so I won't forget it? And here, ma'am, you better take this purty little reticule o' yours in with you, 'cause——"

"Nurse," said Drusilla, drawing in her head, "you had better sit down and be still. The coach is about to start."

"Yes, ma'am, so I will, soon's ever I find a convenient place for these gum shoes in case we have to get out in the wet, 'cause you see, honey——"

The sudden starting of the coach stopped mammy's oration short by jerking her forward upon her hands and knees.

"Lor's a massy upon me! This is a pretty beginning, isn't it now? if it's all agoing to be like this!" grumbled mammy, as she gathered herself up, and reeled to and fro with the swinging action of the coach before she could recover her equilibrium and take her seat.

Drusilla, who was looking out of the window, and waving her hand in a last adieu to her poor devoted servant, did not perceive mammy's summersault or her complaints.

The coach swung on at a fearful rate until it reached Fourteenth street, where it stopped at the great hotel there.

"I s'pects here's where they're gwine to pick up the other passenger, which sorry enough am I for it as anybody else should be intruding upon us," said mammy, folding her arms and sitting up as if she had been in her own private equipage.

But Drusilla lay back in her corner, not even caring enough about her unknown fellow passenger to turn her eyes towards the sidewalk.

A tall young man, wrapped in a dark cloak, with its collar turned up around his face, and wearing a cap pulled low over his brow, came out of the hotel, followed by a porter with some luggage.

The luggage was put into the boot behind. The young man climbed up on top.

"Oh, a outside passenger, after all, thank goodness," said mammy, reposing herself cautiously back upon the cushions to avoid another jar as the horses started.

The coach thundered down Fourteenth street south, and onward until it reached the foot of the Long Bridge, where it slackened speed, as "the law directs."

Ah, Heaven! what pleasing, painful memories were awakened in the poor child's mind and heart by the sight of this old bridge.

Upon just such a day and hour as this she had crossed it for the first time. Then as now, the gorgeous crimson rays of the afternoon sun blazed down upon the river, and the wintry wooded shores were reflected in deep shadows along the reddened waters. Then as now, the scene was transfigured by the hour into supernal beauty and glory.

But *then* she was a newly made and blessed bride,

seated by her husband's side and going to share his home and bless his life.

Scarcely eleven months had passed, and now, now she was recrossing the same river, gazing on the same scene, at the same hour,—a deserted wife though an expectant mother—a nearly heart-broken woman because an accusing spirit, going to confront her husband, and confound his criminal plans. And at this hour on the morrow, where should she be? At Old Lyon Hall, bringing exposure and shame upon her guilty but still dear Alick—bringing mortification and sorrow to his expectant young bride—spreading consternation and gloom among the gay wedding guests. Could she bear to do this? But perhaps at this hour to-morrow she might be dead and "past her pain," for who could say whether she would have strength to live through the terrors of the scene she was so resolved to brave?

Her mournful reverie was interrupted by mammy. The slow motion of the coach was favorable to conversation, and mammy loved to let her tongue run.

"You see that sunset, don't you, ma'am?" asked the old woman, pointing to where the sun was slowly sinking behind some long black clouds that lay along the summits of the western hills.

"Yes, I see them."

"That means bad weather, ma'am. All the good Indy summer goes down with that sun, ma'am. You may take my 'sperience for that. We gwine to have rain and wind. and may be snow and sleet. For my part I pray to the Lord as we may reach our journey's end before it comes too severe. When does you expect to get there, ma'am?"

"Some time to-morrow afternoon or evening; I do not exactly know the hour."

The coach reached the western terminus of the bridge, passed quietly through it, and then rapidly increasing its speed, thundered onward over the rough old turnpike road.

Trees, houses, farms, forests flew past as the coach whirled onward up hill and down dale, until it reached Alexandria.

It drew up in the midst of the old town, before its office, took the address of the single passenger for whom

it was directed to call, changed horses for a fresh start, and swung around into Duke street.

What was it here that suddenly aroused Drusilla from her painful absorption in her own troubled thoughts?

The coach drew up before the house in which she had been married!

She let down her veil, and, growing rapidly red and pale with excitement, looked out.

Soon the door opened, and the young minister—the very one who had performed her marriage ceremony—came out, carpet-bag in hand, and shawl over his shoulders.

"You see I am quite punctual," he said, speaking to the gentleman passenger on top.

The other did not reply, but probably made a sign, for the minister nodded pleasantly, saying:

"Yes. I am coming up there to sit by you. Besides, the night is so fine it would be a pity to box one's self up inside."

And with this the reverend traveler climbed to his place, and the coach started.

Drusilla sat back in her corner and drew aside her veil. Then she saw at the same moment mammy draw her head in from the other window and raise her eyes with a look of astonishment.

"Well, if that don't beat Injuns!"

"What, nurse?" inquired Drusilla.

"Why, honey, that gentleman as has just got up on top, is the Reberend Mr. Hopper."

"You have known him, then," said Drusilla, with awakened interest.

"Hi, honey, why wouldn't I know my own pastors and masters and sponsors in baptism? Sure I does know him, good too. Didn't I sit underneaf of his preaching ebber since here he's been till I come to lib long o' you? What you talking 'bout, honey? I knows him good as I do my own chillun."

"Is he an Alexandria man?"

"Oh lor, no, honey, not he! He comes from the northud and hasn't been in these here parts moren' a year; no, nor come to think of it, that long, nyther; 'cause I 'members well, he come the first of last Janivary as ebber was."

"Then," thought Drusilla to herself, "he could not have

been but a few days in the State before he married Alick and me." And speaking aloud, she asked—"What did you say his name was, nurse? I have forgotten."

"Hopper, child! Mr. Hopper, honey; the Reberent Mr. Hopper; which whoever heard tell of a reberent gentleman of the name o' Hopper, which to my thinking is more besuited a dancing-master, or a skipping-jack nor a Methody minis'er. But so it is, honey; and I 'spose people ain't to be blamed for their misfortnit names. But what *I* would like to know is, what he gwine prowly-wowling 'bout the country for?" said mammy.

And Drusilla shared her curiosity, though she did not answer it.

"What, indeed, could be taking this young Methodist minister, who had married her to Alick, and who could testify to the validity of the marriage? What *could* be taking him on the same day, by the same conveyance, on the same journey with herself? Could his errand have any connection with Alick's approaching iniquitous marriage, or with his prior one? Indeed it looked so.

"But nonsense, I am morbid and fanciful; the minister who married us happens to be journeying at the same time and in the same coach with myself, and I jump to the conclusion that he is going to the like place on the like business. What a weak fool my sorrows have made me, to be sure," said Drusilla to herself, taking her imagination to task for its vagaries.

But she could not quite stop its wanderings.

"I'll tell you what, honey, the night is a-going to be a bad one. Them clouds over there is a banking up like mountains of soot. And the most *I* care for is this:—it will drive them there passengers from the top to the inside, to molest us," said mammy, drawing her head in from the window.

"Well, they have a right to come, nurse. You would not keep them out in the rain all night, would you?"

"Yes; that I would; 'cause I want to have the coach all to ourselves," said mammy, positively.

It was quite dark and very cloudy when the coach reached the little, rural town of Drainsville, where the horses were to be changed and the passengers were to take tea.

"Come, honey; let us get out," said mammy, hiding away some of her treasures, while she loaded herself with others.

"I think I would rather stay here, nurse," said Drusilla, languidly.

"No, no, no," objected mammy, authoritatively, "not at all. I can't allow it. The coach will be here for a good half an hour. You get out, and come in the house, and walk about a little to stretch your limbs; and take off your bonnet to ease your head, and have your tea comfortable. It will freshen you up a heap for the rest of the journey.

"And the goodness gracious alive knows as you *need* freshening up, and you won't get another chance till the stage stops at Frostville to breakfast. And that will be a good twelve hour long. Think of that, now, and do as I 'vises of you."

Before mammy was half through her exordium, Drusilla, convinced by her eloquence, had risen to her feet, and was drawing her cloak around her.

She saw through the darkness her fellow-travelers from the top get off and go into the bar-room of the neat and comfortable inn. And she gave her hand to the guard, who kindly came around to help her to alight.

"There, Miss, there is the private door—a nice place, Miss, with a nice landlady and a good table; shall I take you in, Miss," he inquired, hoisting a large umbrella, for it was now beginning to rain.

"Thanks, yes," returned Drusilla, "the ground seems slippery."

"This way, if you please, Miss."

"Bad manners to your imperence, this lady is a married lady, and not a young Miss," said mammy, indignantly.

"Beg pardon; but I thought the madam *looked* young," said the guard, laughing, yet not disrespectfully.

He took her safely across the slippery way, and showed her into a neat, well warmed and lighted parlor, where the table was cleanly set for tea.

The landlady, a cheerful, hospitable looking person, as a landlady should be, came to meet her.

"Would you like to go to a bedroom, ma'am?" inquired the smiling hostess, who was led into no mistake

by the child face of her guest, because her quick and experienced eye had discovered the truth at a glance.

"Yes, please," answered Drusilla.

And preceded by the landlady and followed by the nurse, she was taken up-stairs to a large bedroom, whose red carpet, white walls and draperies, and bright fire, gave it a very pleasant aspect.

Drusilla sauntered about, enjoying the privilege of locomotion.

"You'll have tea, I suppose, ma'am?" inquired the hostess.

"Yes, please; and I will have it here," answered Drusilla, as she took off her bonnet and laid it on the table.

The landlady left the room to issue orders.

While waiting for her tea, Drusilla washed her face and took down her hair and combed it out, and then did it up loosely in a net, so that she would be able to lie down and sleep with it so. Then she made the fastenings of her clothing easy.

And by the time she had finished preparing her toilet for the night journey, a maid-servant appeared with a table-cloth and tea-tray.

Drusilla drank two cups of tea, for she was feverishly thirsty. And then, being scolded into the measure by mammy, who assured her that two lives depended on her feeding, she ate a buttered muffin, and the breast of a boiled chicken with cream sauce.

Drusilla, in the childlike simplicity of her heart, would have made her nurse sit down to the table and partake her supper.

But mammy asserted that she—Aunt Hector—knew her place. And so she filled the slop bowl brimming full of tea, piled up a plate with three quarters of a chicken and half-a-dozen muffins went off to a distant corner of the room, seated herself upon an old chest, ranged her supper around her, and, with a promptness and dispatch that made her mistress stare, she dispatched all these edibles, and announced herself in condition to pursue her journey.

"And now if the coach is ready, I is."

But if mammy and the coach were both ready, the passengers at the tea-table down-stairs were not; but the coach was not so very strictly confined to time, and so it

was a good quarter of an hour longer, and Drusilla had ample leisure to put on her bonnet, and to pay her bill, before she and her attendant were summoned to take their places.

The guard kindly and carefully assisted the delicate young matron into her corner of the back seat, saying that he would warn the other passengers who were coming in for the night that the whole of it belonged to her.

She thanked him, and then called to her nurse to make haste and enter.

"Yes, honey, yes; I'm coming just as soon's ever I catch my eyes on them two little red morocky trunks, which I haven't seen 'em since we left Alexandry," said mammy, who was behind the coach, engaged in a sharp argument with both coachman and hostler.

"I tell you, woman," said the former, "the blamed red trunks is all right. They is inside of the boot, kivered over with the ile skin to keep out the wet."

"Yes, so you say; but I'd a heap rather see 'em with my own two looking eyes. And believe you I won't till I does," snapped mammy.

"There then, blast you, look for yourself," said the hostler, pulling apart the leathern flaps of the boot.

Mammy peeped through the aperture, and seeing the treasure safe, she smiled and said:

"Thank ye, sir. Sorry to give you trouble; but seeing is believing, and nothing short of it ain't.——Yes, honey; yes, honey, I'm coming now!" she exclaimed, in answer to her lady's repeated summonses.

Mammy tumbled up into the coach with even more than her usual blundering awkwardness; for it was as dark as Tophet, and the guard did not seem to consider it necessary to hold a light to such a refractory passenger. And so mammy, after fumbling blindly about to find the seat she had formerly occupied, turned and dropped herself heavily down upon a gentleman's lap. A simultaneous—

"Oh!"

A cry of pain from the victim and of surprise from the oppressor arose.

"Beg pardon, sir, I'm sure; but I'm a heavy ole 'oman, and you shouldn't a hit up agin me."

"Hit up agin you! Oh!" exclaimed the injured party, in a tragi-comic groan.

At the sound of his voice Drusilla started violently, and lowered her veil; though in fact it was too dark either to see or to be seen; for oh! with what a thrill of vague dread she recognized Dick Hammond's tones, although she could not discern his face!

"I wish you wouldn't yowl out in that onyearthly way, sir; you'll disturb a deliky lady I has in my charge," expostulated mammy.

"Oh, I'll roar you softly an' it were a sucking dove, and bear my tortures with the patience of a slaughtered lamb," laughed Dick, in a lachrymose manner.

"I hope it ain't as bad as all that, sir. Take a sup o' brandy out of my bottle," said mammy, feeling about all the vacant seats with her big hands.

At this instant the coach started so suddenly with such a violent lurch, that mammy was jerked back, and precipitated upon the knees of the unlucky Dick. And in scrambling upon her feet she laid hold of his hair to help herself up by.

"Outch!" screeched the victim. "She's finished me now. She has scalped me and broken both my legs. I know they'll have to be amputated!"

"Very sorry, sir, I'm sure," said mammy, as she reeled about with the swinging of the coach, and finally dropped into a vacant seat. "Very sorry, but you *will* keep a hitting up agin me. I hope you ain't hurt much?"

"Hurt much? I tell you you have crushed both my knees to a pulp, and I know I shall have to get them taken off."

"Very sorry, sir! but I can recommend you to a doctor as saws legs off beautiful, and likewise to a upholster who sells elegant wooden ones," said mammy sympathetically.

"Many thanks! But how about my head? You have pulled two great handfuls of hair out by the roots, and I know I shall have to get the rest shaved!" laughed and groaned Dick.

"Well, sir, I can direct you to a gentleman of the barbarous line of business, who will shave your head as clean as a peeled potaty, and sell you a lovely false wig."

"A million of gratitudes! When I require your valuable guidance I will seek it. But for the present, I begin to suspect that my limbs were not quite crushed, but only benumbed; and instead of being scalped outright I have only lost a handful of hair," said Dick, as he settled himself comfortably in his seat, and subsided into silence.

"How does you feel now, honey? Is you comformerble?" inquired mammy, in a low tone, addressing her charge.

She received no answer.

"I do b'lieve how she's 'sleep. How is you getting along, honey?" repeated mammy. But with no better success.

"I do 'spose she *is* 'sleep! But, Lor', I daren't go nearer to her to see for fear I should fall on her, and mash her, which would be dreadful. Tell me if you is asleep, honey; 'cause if you is I won't wake you up," said mammy, raising her voice, and listening attentively.

But still she received no reply.

"Wonder what's the matter with her?" muttered mammy, uneasily.

"She's asleep," answered Dick.

"Well, if she's 'sleep, why couldn't she tell me so when I axed her?"

"She has told you so," replied Dick.

"Lor'! why she hasn't said a single word!"

No; but she has told you so in the only way a sleeper could,—by her silence. If she had been awake, she would have spoken; wouldn't she?"

"Sure enough; I never thought of that before. See what it is to have a head-piece. But is you sartin sure she is asleep?"

"Certain sure," answered Dick, bending forward, and listening to the soft, low, regular breathing of his invisible fellow-passenger.

"Well, thank Goodness for that!" said mammy, as she settled herself to rest.

The stage-coach had been thundering on its way at a tremendous rate for several miles, but now it had to cross a broad but shallow stream and to go slowly.

Suddenly, Dick yawned, and then, addressing his fat neighbor, inquired:

"Does your ladyship object to smoking?"

"Yes, sir," replied mammy, sharply; "my ladyship *do* very much so, indeed; and so do my missus,—which, sleeping or 'waking, I believe it would make her sick."

"Oh, your missus! True! Well, let's see what sort of weather it is outside—though, in point of fact, I had rather bear the rain than forbear my cigar," said Dick, as he opened the window and looked forth into the blackness of the night.

The rain had ceased and the clouds had parted as with the promise of clearing off entirely. A few stars were shining out.

"Come; not so bad a night after all. I have been out in worse. And as soon as we get upon dry land again, I think I will climb up on top and take a smoke. Eh, what do you say, Aunty? Shall I help you up also? I know you'd like your pipe!" said Dick.

"I scorn your insiniwations, sir, and 'vises of you, if you is a-going out in the damp night air, as you'd better take care and not get cold in your 'raw head and bloody bones,' as you was a-complaining of."

"Thanks for your caution, Aunty. I shall be sure to profit by it," laughed Dick.

And then as the coach was slowly crawling out of the mud that bordered the shallow stream, he called the coachman to halt.

"I wish to get up on top," said Dick.

And when the man complied with his wishes, Dick left his seat and went up.

There now remained two other passengers besides Drusilla and her attendant. These were two gentlemen that occupied the corners of the front seat, with their backs to the horses. But they sat so quietly that but for their breathing and an occasional cough or low-toned word, mammy would have been unconscious of their presence.

And now Drusilla bent forward and cautiously touched the nurse, and whispered:

"Mammy, come and sit by me. I have something to say to you. Don't answer me aloud, but do as I tell you."

"Lor', honey, is you waked up? It was that there

man a-making of his noise, getting outn't his seat. Some people can't never keep quiet. But, honey, I'm afraid if I moves I might fall on you," said mammy.

"No, you won't; we have no jolts here. Guide yourself by the left side of the seat, and I will give you my hand."

"Yes, honey," said the old woman, and slowly and carefully she changed her "base," and safely reached the haven beside her mistress.

"Nurse," whispered Drusilla, "I have not been asleep."

"My! haven't you, honey? Why didn't you answer me then?"

"Because I did not wish to talk. That gentleman who got in just the moment before you, is a passenger that was picked up at Drainsville, he is the same person who brought me the bad news yesterday."

"Don't say!"

"Hush! speak very low; we are not alone, you know."

"And to think I never knowed him agin."

"That is not strange. It is quite too dark for you to have seen his face. I only knew him by his voice."

"Well, I heard his voice too; but I didn't know it agin."

"You heard it only in a moment of terror, and when its very sound was unnatural. It is not strange that you should not have recognized it again."

"Well, I'm sure! Where's he going?"

"I don't know, nurse. Probably where *we* are going. But I do not wish him to recognize *me*, lest he should like me to talk; and I cannot talk of my affairs. I say this to caution you. Be on your guard."

"Yes, honey, I'll be on my guard. And you may keep yourself dark during the night; but I don't see how you gwine to manage when it is daylight."

"I must keep my veil down," said Drusilla.

"Well, honey, I hope you will succeed."

CHAPTER XLIV.

HOW SHE SPED.

The night drave on * * *
The wind blew as 'twad blaun its last,
The rattling showers rushed on the blast,
The speedy gleams the darkness swallowed.
Deep, lang and loud the tempest bellowed,
From heav'n the clouds poured all their floods,
The doubling storm roars through the woods.
—BURNS.

LIGHT here and there, like sparks of fire in seas of darkness. Darkness within and without. The two red lamps that flanked the coachman's seat, the single lantern carried by the guard, and the bright point of Dick's cigar as he sat smoking on the top of the coach, only seemed by contrast to make that darkness deeper.

The coach slowly clawed up a long hill at the summit of which was a country inn, with its usual accessories of grocery-store, blacksmith's shop and post-office.

Here all was cheerful bustle, with the glancing lights, the voices of men, the tramp of steeds, and all the merry movement of a way station.

And here the coach stopped to change horses.

The outside passenger jumped down and went into the little bar-room of the inn, which Drusilla could see from her window was half-filled with country loafers and village politicians, drinking, smoking, discussing the news, and settling the elections. In two minutes the outside passenger was "hail fellow, well met," with every one of them, and generously treating the whole company with the best in the bar. Ah, poor Dick!

Meanwhile the guard came to the coach door with his lantern, and inquired if any of the ladies or gentlemen desired to get our for refreshments, as they should stop there fifteen minutes.

The two gentlemen on the front seat at once left the coach. As they got out, Drusilla saw that one was the Reverend Mr. Hopper. The other was the stranger they had taken up first in Washington.

When they had disappeared, the guard turned to Drusilla and repeated the question, whether she or her attendant would like to leave the coach.

Drusilla politely declined to do so. But mammy got up and tumbled out of the coach, and called to one of the hostlers;

"Hey! I say! Come here, you sir, and fetch a light this way."

The man who was thus summoned, thinking that some accident had happened, ran to the spot, demanding:

"What is it?"

"I want you just to look in that there leather place behind, and see if them there little red morocky trunks is all right."

"Blast you and your trunks too! Who do you think is going to be bothered with them?" angrily retorted the man as he left her.

"Come in, nurse. Oh, *do* come in," pleaded Drusilla, from the window. "I am *sure* the trunks are all safe."

But mammy was not in a very compliant humor. She ran splashing through slop and mire, and burst into the bar-room, exclaiming:

"Oh, do, kind gentlemen, some of you come out and see if them there two little red morocky trunks of the madam's is all right."

The company around the fire stared at her in astonishment and ridicule.

But Dick, the most good-natured of all creatures, took up a light and followed her.

"Here, sir," she said, leading the way to the boot, "just you pull apart these here flaps and hold the light so I can peep in and see."

Dick laughingly complied with her request.

"Yes, there they is, thank goodness, safe *as yet*. Thanky' sir. Now I'll get in the coach, please," she said, with a courtesy as she returned to the side of her charge.

"Is it raining?" inquired Drusilla.

"No, honey, but black as Beelzebub; so it must come down heavy enough afore long. And now, honey, while them there men is all out'n the way let me make you comfortable for the night. You come over on this middle seat while I make you a bed on the back one."

Drusilla complied, for she was very, very weary with sitting up so long.

Mammy, with the help of a softly-packed carpet-bag, that served for a pillow, with a clean pocket handkerchief spread over it for a case, and two large shawls for coverings, made a very comfortable couch.

Drusilla took off her bonnet and hung it up, and loosened her hair and her clothes, and lay down. And mammy tucked her up.

Just at this moment came the guard with a tray and a tumbler.

"One of the gentlemen from the inn has sent this to the lady with his respectful compliments, and begs she will take it," he said, as he handed the offer in at the window.

"Yes, honey, you take it, and drink it, too. It's a hot mulled port wine negus, spiced; and it will warm you and put you to sleep," said mammy, as she took the glass from the messenger and passed it to the mistress.

The poor, chilled, tired and nervous creature really needed, and felt that she needed, just such a cordial at just that hour. She inhaled its steamy, spicy fragrance with satisfaction and desire, yet she hesitated to take it.

"I don't know who sent it, nurse," she said.

"Now what the mischief *that* got to do with it? Do *that* make it better or worse? I s'pect the good-natured young man who 'cused me o' scalping him and breaking of his legs sent it. But that's nyther here nor there Whoever sent it, sent it in kindness; and don't you ever 'fuse human kindness when you needs it, come from where it will, 'cause it hurts the feelings in the saftest place. Here, honey, drink it while it's steaming hot—hot as love."

"Well," said Drusilla, taking the glass and sipping the cordial, "when you return the glass send word to the gentleman that I thank him very much for his thoughtfulness in sending me this restorative, and that I know it will do me good."

Five minutes after, when Drusilla, having finished her cordial, was comfortably reposing on her couch, and the guard came for the glass, mammy delivered her message thus:

"Tell the young man as sent this that the madam says how she's very much obleeged to him for the hot stuff,

which it has gone right to the right place, and done her good and no mistake."

The next moment the three gentlemen passengers took their places inside the coach, two of them sitting on the front seat in opposite corners, and one of them, Dick, sitting on the middle seat beside mammy.

The coach started again. The night was so dark, and the down-hill road so steep, that it's progress was cautiously slow.

The male passengers wrapped themselves closely in their "mauds," pulled their caps down over their eyes, and composed themselves to sleep.

Mammy opened her luncheon basket, and, having first hospitably offered to share its contents with each and all of her fellow-passengers and been politely refused, set to work and ate a very hearty supplementary supper off the best it contained of food and drink, and then gathered up the fragments and put them away.

Finally, she took off her best bonnet—of the Quaker or Methodist pattern,—hung it up beside her mistress's, tied a little woolen shawl over her head, wrapped a big one around her shoulders, and resigned herself to rest.

Soon all were sleeping except Drusilla, who, physically speaking, was more favorably placed for sleep than any of the others. She lay very comfortably, really rocked, not racked, by the swinging motion of the coach as it rolled down hill. She was very tired, and so, in a bodily sense, she almost enjoyed this soft reposing and easy rocking; but she was not sleepy, for her mind was too active with the thoughts of what lay around and before her.

Where were Dick Hammond and Mr. Hopper going? Who was the tall, dark gentleman they had taken up at Washington, and who certainly seemed to be of the same party, since she had seen him signalling to Mr. Hopper? Was their errand in the country connected with the same sad business that was taking herself thither?

Dick might be only going down in answer to his uncle's invitation to the wedding, she reflected. "But, no, not so!" she thought, instantly repudiating the idea that Richard Hammond, after all that he had said in reprobation of the iniquitous marriage, could possibly sanction it by his presence.

But what then was he going for? and why was he taking Mr. Hopper and that other gentleman—who looked as if he were in some way connected with the law, along with him?

Was he going to denounce Alick to his uncle and cousin? Was he taking Mr. Hopper down as a witness to Alick's former marriage? And the mysterious legal-looking gentleman as a prosecutor?

As these thoughts chased themselves through her mind, she clasped her hands and moaned.

Oh, were they all three combining to go and overwhelm her Alick, and cover him with humiliation and confusion? she asked herself; and for the moment her Alick appeared to her, not as a criminal pursued by the just avengers, but as a victim hunted down by relentless persecutors, of whom she saw herself the chief.

"Oh, why—oh, why couldn't I have kept still and let him marry his cousin and be happy with her? Oh, Alick! oh, poor Alick! But that would have been a crime. Ah, Heaven, how hard is my lot to have to choose between making him wretched or leaving him criminal!" she moaned, twisting her fingers and weeping.

She dreaded the coming of the morning. She feared the daylight that might discover her face to these men, who she thought were confederated to ruin her husband. She dreaded their recognizing and speaking to her. But she was determined to have nothing to say to them, or to do with them; for, under present circumstances she felt that any intercourse between her and them would look too much like entering into their conspiracy. And now her whole gentle soul revolted in horror from those three harmless and unconscious gentlemen, who were reclining on the seats before her, and "sleeping the sleep of innocence."

Yes; all in the coach were at rest except herself. Nor could she, with all her mental distress, very long resist the influences that were wooing her to repose. Her excessive bodily fatigue, combined with the soporific qualities of the spiced cordial she had taken, the swinging motion of the coach and the lulling sound of the falling rain, soon overcame her consciousness, and she too slumbered in a forgetfulness of all her sorrows.

She slept on for several hours, until she was awakened

by the flashing of lights, the hallooing of men and the trampling of beasts, as the coach stopped to change horses at one of the noisiest post-houses on the road.

The other passengers were aroused at the same time.

Mammy awoke from some dream of her professional duties, yawned, stretching her jaws almost to dislocation, and thereby discovering a most fearful abyss, and still dreaming, exclaiming:

"Yaw-aw! Yes, honey! Tell the madam I'll be up and dressed in one minute. And tell that boy to run for the doctor. Ow! Yaw-aw!"

But at this noisy station the people were very active. And before the good woman could collect her faculties the coach started, and she herself was again precipitated down into the land of "Nod."

Drusilla could not sleep again, so to ease her position she sat up and reclined back in the corner of her seat, and in a dreamy, half-conscious condition she gazed through the opposite window.

At first it seemed but a solid wall of darkness past which the coach was so swiftly whirling; but gradually, as her eyes accustomed themselves to the circumstances, this darkness grew less opaque, this obscurity less impenetrable, until at length she could dimly discern the boundaries of mountains, valleys, forests, and the outlines of rocks, trees and buildings.

At long intervals she could perceive the form of some solitary farm-house, with its barn, shed, cattle-pen, field, orchard and garden. Half waking, she would wonder who lived and worked there; and half sleeping, she would people the place with the beings of her dream.

Sometimes she saw a lonely woodcutter's cottage on the edge of a forest, and vaguely conjectured what sort of life its denizens led. Once in such a place she saw a single light burning in the tiny window of a little upper chamber, in the interior of which the shadow of a woman was bending over the shadow of a sick-bed. She had but a glimpse of all this, as the coach rolled past, yet her ready sympathies went forth to the poor watcher and the suffering invalid.

Once she was treated to a brilliant picture in the darkness—an oasis in the desert. It was a brand-new, com-

modious country house, well seated on a hill; lights were glancing from every window; music was borne forth upon the wind; even in that inclement weather, somebody seemed to be giving a great party and to be keeping it up all night. But before she could observe more the coach had rushed by and left the festive scene far behind.

Once she noticed a little roadside hut, and in its doorway, a poor, old woman, thinly clad, holding a lantern in her hand and bending outward in an attitude of intense anxiety, as if looking for some one. "In her poor way, she is watching and waiting, as I used to do. Has she a husband, or perhaps a son, who is breaking her heart?" mused Drusilla, as the coach swung onward and left this sad picture also in its rear.

Such signs of life, however, were very rare, on that lonely road, at that late hour. The few hamlets, farms and huts they passed were for the most part shut up, dark and silent as graves.

But they were now penetrating deeper and deeper into the mountain fastnesses; and farm-houses and villages were fewer and farther between. For miles and miles nothing but the most savage solitudes loomed in the blackness of darkness through which they passed. And Drusilla, reclining back in her corner, dreamily gazing forth through the rain-dimmed window upon this obscure scene, vaguely wondered when these solitudes would be peopled, when this wilderness would "bloom and blossom as the rose."

And so, while all her fellow-passengers were deeply buried in unconsciousness, she dreamed on her waking dream. But often in the midst of these reveries the sudden sharp recollection of her own trouble pierced her heart like a sword and drew from her lips a bitter groan. Then again the influence of the scene and hour, the obscurity, the picturesqueness, the rocking motion of the coach, the soothing sound of the falling rain without, the silence and stillness of all within, lulled her senses to repose if not to sleep.

Thus, slumbering, dreaming, starting, waking, she passed this weird night, that ever in her after life seemed to her less like the reality than like the phantasmagoria of a hasheesh-conjured vision.

Towards morning, being very much wearied with sitting up, she lay down again, and, as is usual with uneasy sleepers, just at daylight she fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XLV.

DRUSILLA'S ARRIVAL.

What shall she be ere night?—BYRON.

SHE slept profoundly and until she was rudely awakened by a shock of noise and action.

It was now broad day, and it was raining hard. The coach was drawn up before the door of the large, low building, the one hotel in the mountain hamlet. Hostlers and porters were crowding around it.

Drusilla lay quietly in her shadowy recess, resolved not to move until the male passengers had left the stage, which she saw they were preparing to do.

First, Dick Hammond climbed over mammy, who was still fast asleep, and got out. Then the minister and the lawyer, one after the other, surmounted the same obstruction and passed on the same way. And these three gentlemen went into the bar-room.

But mammy slept on.

Drusilla sat up and quickly tightened her own dress and put on her bonnet. And then she tried to wake her attendant, but without success; for mammy did nothing but yawn and talk in her sleep and settle herself to rest again; until the guard came, and, shaking her roughly, shouted in her ears:

"Come, come, old woman! wake up and get out! the coach stops here to breakfast."

"Yaw! yaw! I just said how it would be! I know'd it would happen before morning!" said mammy, yawning fearfully and then opening her eyes and exclaiming:

"Oh, dear! why, what's this? Where is we, to be sure? Oh, I, members! This must be Frostville. And now I wonder if them there little red morocky trunks is safe?"

"Yes, yes, nurse, of course they are safe. And now

come and do let us get into the hotel as quickly as possible," said Drusilla, impatiently, for she saw that the people in charge of the stage were vexed at the delay.

"Why, Lor', honey, is *you* awake at last? Well, I declare! How sound you *did* sleep all night, to be sure! and a blessed thing for you, too; but as for me, I couldn't close my eyes all the whole night, for watching of you, and thinking of them there two little red morocky trunks. I wonder if they *is* safe," said mammy, uneasily.

"Yes, yes, blame you! Come, get out! I can't stop here waiting on you all day," said the guard, half angrily. And with very little ceremony he bundled the old woman out of the coach.

And then he hoisted an umbrella, and held it over the delicate young invalid as he helped her to alight, and led her across to the private door of the hotel.

Mammy followed, dragging all her belongings, and grumbling:

"I haven't seen them there little red morocky trunks yet, which it is my private belief that the guards is in league with the highway robbers, same as they say the p'lice is with the burglarians in the towns; and they 'wides spiles, share and share alike, that I do. Goodness knows, one needs to have one's eyes all around one's head and all of 'em wide open all the time, to watch these fellers."

"Nurse, be quiet. The trunks are safe; or, if they are not, the loss is mine," said Drusilla.

"The loss may be yours, but the illconweniency is mine, ma'am. How in the world am I to do my professional dooty without my proper conveniences?" inquired mammy.

But before her question could be answered, the guard had conducted her mistress into the best parlor of the humble hotel.

It was a very pleasant place to come into out of the rain, a spacious room with a low ceiling, and an ample fireplace with a huge fire of pine and oak wood roaring and blazing up the chimney; on the floor a home-made carpet; at the windows, home-made blue paper blinds; along the walls, country manufactured chip-bottomed chairs and chintz-covered sofas; over the wooden mantelpiece, the oldest

fashioned looking-glass, ornamented with peacock's feathers ;—altogether it was a room breathing of real rustic life, and very refreshing after velvet carpets, satin damask draperies, gilded chairs, and cheval mirrors.

Many doors opened from this large, low parlor into many other rooms, for in this mountain region the houses were all built on one floor and of one story, to protect them from injury by the high winds of that locality.

Drusilla stood for a little while before this beautiful fire, basking in its genial warmth ; and then to relieve her long cramped limbs, she walked up and down the cheerful room and looked through the windows upon the busy scene without, in which landlord, postmaster, coachman, guard and hostlers seemed all to take an important part.

Tired of this view, she turned from the windows, and then, from an open door on the left side of the fireplace, she had a view of the long coffee-room, in which was set forth a very inviting breakfast. There all her fellow-passengers, as well as many other persons, were impatiently waiting for the signal to sit down to the table.

Drusilla not wishing to join this company, went to the bell and rang it peremptorily.

A chambermaid answered the summons.

"Can I have a bedroom at once?" inquired the lady.

"Oh, yes, ma'am, certainly. This way, if you please," smiled the woman, opening one of the many doors and leading the way into an inner chamber of the same general character as the parlor, except that it was furnished with a bed and a toilet table, with pure white dimity hangings, and a wash-stand with a plenty of fresh water and clean towels.

Drusilla threw herself into the white draperied easy-chair, before the blazing wood-fire, and then inquired—

"Can I have breakfast for myself and my attendant served here?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, certainly," assented the woman, in what seemed to be her stereotyped phrase.

"Then I would like to have it soon, if you please," said Drusilla.

The girl went away to execute her orders.

Drusilla, left alone with her nurse, laid off her bonnet, and bathed her face and hands and arranged her hair.

While engaged in this refreshing process, she overneard voices speaking in the parlor she had just left.

They appeared to belong to Dick and his companions, and they seemed to be discussing with the landlord the speediest manner in which to prosecute their journey.

"You say the new Bee-line of coaches across country is started, landlord?" spoke Dick.

"Yes, sir; started on Monday. The road was first opened on Saturday."

"At what hour do they pass here?"

"At half-past ten, sir, almost to a minute."

"And they pass directly through Hammondsville?"

"Directly, sir."

"And Hammondsville is within six or eight miles of Old Lyon Hall, while Saulsburg is nine or ten miles off. Besides, at Hammondsville, I shall be near enough to my place, Hammond Hill, to get my own horses, with altogether a better chance of reaching our destination to-night. Come! I have a good mind to have my luggage taken off, and to wait for the Bee-line coach. What do you say, gentlemen!" inquired Dick.

"I say that we had best first be sure that we can get places in the new coach, before we give up our seats in the old one. 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' you know," answered the lawyer.

"What are the chances of our obtaining places, landlord?" inquired the clergyman.

"How many places do you want, gentlemen?" inquired my host.

"Only three; and, rather than miss, we would not mind taking outside places."

"Oh, be at ease, sir; I can almost insure you places on these terms, either outside or inside. At this season of the year, the coaches are very seldom crowded."

"All right!" said Dick, "I will go and have our luggage taken off this one."

"Thank Heaven, we are going to lose our fellow-passengers!" exclaimed Drusilla.

"I thanks Heaven, too, fer that same. But 'long's that young man's gwine to have his luggidge took off I must go and see that he don't get hold of them there two little red morocky trunks," said mammy, starting off for the door.

"Indeed you shall do no such thing," said Drusilla, laying hold of her.

"But why mustn't I then?"

"Because in the first place the trunks are in no sort of danger. Gentlemen are not thieves."

"Oh, indeed!"

"And in the second place, I would rather lose the whole of our luggage than have that gentleman recognize you, as I believe he fortunately failed to do last night. Sit down and keep quiet. I insist upon it, nurse!"

The old woman dropped down into a chair, grumbling.

"And I'd like to know what we is to do if them there two little red morocky trunks is lost or stolen!"

"The risk is mine alone, nurse. And now hush, for here is the waiter come to lay the cloth for our breakfast," said Drusilla.

Very soon a most delicious morning meal was laid before them—fragrant coffee, maple sugar, rich cream, hot rolls, fresh butter, venison steaks, pure honey—luxuries to be found in their perfections only on the mountains.

Mammy inhaled the aromas arising from this breakfast table as though every breath was a delight. She coaxed and scolded her mistress into making a very good meal.

And then she made a very much better one herself.

After this they prepared to resume their journey.

In going out to take her seat in the coach, Drusilla drew down her veil to avoid recognition, in any chance-meeting with Mr. Hammond. She need not have done so, for poor Dick was in the bar-room treating his friends.

The weather was worse than ever. From the clouds above the rain was pouring in torrents; from the valleys below the vapors were rising in heavy fogs. The boundaries of the mountain scenery were lost in mist.

The day was as dim with a white obscurity as the night had been with a black one.

Drusilla and her attendant had the inside of the coach all to themselves for the next few hours.

Drusilla, almost worn out with her journey, reclined at nearly full length upon the back seat.

Mammy, having asked and obtained leave, lay down upon the front seat.

The remainder of their journey passed monotonously

enough being varied only by the stopping of the coach at the regular post-houses to change horses, and by the altercations between mammy and the guard relative to the safety of "them there two little red morocky trunks," which the guard mentally consigned to the demon full fifty times before they reached their destination.

About noon they stopped to change horses at a small hamlet, where they were joined by other passengers—two honest, good-humored-looking countrymen, who immediately upon their entrance, began to talk of the great wedding which was to come off that same night at Old Lyon Hall.

From their talk Drusilla understood that she was approaching the neighborhood of the old manor.

Deeply interested in the subject of their conversation, she first forced herself to listen calmly, and then to speak.

"Can you tell me how far we are from Old Lyon Hall?" she inquired of the elder man.

"Well, goodness, no, Miss, not exactly; though if I were to hazard a guess, I should say betwixt twenty and thirty miles, more or less," answered the man.

"What is the nearest point at which the road passes the hall?" she next inquired.

"Well, for the life of me, Miss, I could not tell! But the nearest stopping-place is Saulsburg; and that's pretty near twenty miles off here, I know. Might you be going to the Old Hall, Miss?" inquired the traveler, feeling quite free to follow her example and ask questions in his turn.

"I am going to Saulsburg," answered Drusilla, evasively.

"Ah!—There's to be a grand wedding at the Old Hall to-night, Miss," said the traveler.

"So I have heard," coldly answered Drusilla, almost regretting that she had opened conversation with this traveler, and wishing now to close it.

But the good man was well started on the great subject of the day and the place, and he would talk of nothing but the wedding, and to nobody but Drusilla, thinking, doubtless, that a lady, and a young lady too, would be most likely to feel interested in the theme.

Fortunately for Drusilla, her talkative fellow-passenger got out at the very next stopping-place.

Now, having passed the greatest range of the mountains, they were coming into a rather better settled portion of the country, and way-passengers were getting in or out at every post-house; and the theme of conversation with every one of those was—not the crops, nor the races, nor the elections, but—the grand wedding to come off that night at Old Lyon Hall.

About three o'clock in the afternoon they reached the little hamlet of Saulsburg, consisting merely of a small inn and half-a-dozen cottages, nestled at the foot of the Wild Mountain and upon the banks of the Wild River.

Here Drusilla and her attendant got out, in a pouring rain.

The kind-hearted guard hoisted his large umbrella, and led her into the shelter of the little inn parlor, and then went back to the coach to see to the removal of her luggage. He found mammy in high dispute with the porter—subject of debate, of course, "them there two little red morocky trunks."

"Here they are!" said the guard, as the treasures were taken from the boot and set upon the ground; "there they are, blast 'em, and I'm blowed if I don't wish I may never set eyes on you or your blamed trunks again as long as ever I live in this world."

"And so I sees my little red morocky trunks safe, I shan't tear the clothes offen my back for grief if I never see *you* again; so there now!" retorted mammy, as she loaded herself with shawls, carpet-bags, and umbrellas, and followed the porter who carried the precious little trunks into the house.

The luggage was all set down in the hall, and, leaving it there, mammy went into the parlor, where she found her mistress still in her traveling dress, impatiently walking up and down the floor.

"I want to see the landlord, nurse. I have rung twice, but no one has come. You go and try to find him and bring him here. I must have a carriage to convey me to Old Lyon Hall this afternoon."

"My goodness! ain't you tired of traveling yet? And must you set off on another journey again directly," exclaimed mammy, in dismay.

"I am not at the end of my first journey yet, nurse, nor

shall I be until I reach Old Lyon Hall. It is there that I am bound. So go now and call the landlord to me," urged Drusilla.

Before mammy could either obey or expostulate, the landlord himself came in, in answer to Drusilla's first summons.

"Can I have a close carriage immediately, to take me to Old Lyon Hall?" anxiously inquired Drusilla.

The landlord looked surprised at such an unusual demand, and, after staring and rubbing his head, answered, slowly:

"Why, bless your heart, Miss, there ain't such a thing as a close carriage in the whole willage!"

"Well, an open one then—any sort of one, so that it can be got ready at once," said Drusilla, impatiently.

"But there ain't any sort of a carriage about the place, Miss."

"A gig, then, a gig would do," said Drusilla, eagerly.

"We haven't got such a thing, Miss."

"Good heavens, sir, I *must* have some conveyance to take me to Old Lyon Hall this afternoon. I do not care what it costs!" said Drusilla, desperately.

"Oh, you'll be on your way to the wedding there, Miss?"

"Yes, yes, I am going there. Can you get me a conveyance of some sort from some one in the neighborhood? I will pay well for the use of any sort of a carriage to take me to the Old Hall. And I will pay you well for your trouble in getting it for me. Answer, quickly—can you?"

"Dear me, how anxious young folks is for weddings, to be sure!—Stay, let's see—Yes! There's only Mr. Simpkins—he would hire his carryall, I know, and glad to do it."

"Get it, then! I will pay whatever he asks. How long will it take you to get it?" asked Drusilla, breathlessly.

"Why, you see," said the landlord, very leisurely, "Old man Simpkins he lives about a mile from here; and if I put a boy on horseback and send him right off we might get the carryall here at the door inside of an hour.

"Do it then at once; pray hurry! I will pay you in proportion to the haste that you make."

The leisurely landlord sauntered out of the parlor to give his directions.

Drusilla paced up and down the floor in great excitement. The nearer she came to her journey's end the more anxious and agitated she felt.

Mammy stood and watched her in growing wonder. Suddenly mammy spoke out:

"What wedding this they all talking 'bout? I thought we was agoing to see a wery sick man, not a wedding."

"Perhaps to see both, nurse! But pray do not talk to me if you can help it. I am scarcely sane!"

"Which such has been my opinion for some time past," said mammy, sententiously, leaving her patient to pace up and down the room until the latter had paced off some of her excitement.

The landlord put his head into the door, saying:

"The boy has gone after the carriage, Miss, and you may rely on his being back here in an hour's time."

"Thanks. How far do you really think it is from this place to Old Lyon Hall?"

"Why, Miss, some people calls it ten miles, but I don't believe it is more than eight at the outside."

"And how long will it take for me to get there?"

"Let me see," said the landlord in his leisurely way. "It's three o'clock now, ain't it? Yes—well, the boy'll be back by four, and if you start then you'll get there by six or seven. You'll be there in time to dress for the wedding, Miss, which I hear is to be performed by special license at eight o'clock in the evening."

"Very well. Thank you."

"And now, Miss, is there anything else we can do for you?" inquired the slow host.

"No; thanks. Yes! you may send a chamber-maid here," replied Drusilla, incoherently, for in her intense excitement she scarcely knew what she was in need of, or what she was talking about.

When the host had taken his little round head out of the doorway, mammy, who had kept silence for some time, said:

"Now, ma'am, if so it is that you *will* go farther and fare worse to-night, and if you have an hour before you I strongly 'vises of you to take a bedroom and lie down

until it is time for you to start, and then to take a cup of tea before you *do* start. You must keep up your strength. If the matter you come 'bout is so very important, it won't do for you to break down, you know."

Drusilla stopped in her excited walk and reflected. The advice of the nurse was very good. There were other reasons besides care for her own comfort to induce her to engage rooms here. For one thing, she intended to leave her nurse in charge of the luggage, for she was resolved to have no more witnesses to the humiliation of her poor Alick than was absolutely unavoidable; and for another thing, she was resolved to stay no longer at the Old Hall than was necessary to do her painful errand there, but to return as soon as possible to the inn. Therefore, she answered mammy assentingly:

"You are right, nurse. You generally are so, in fact. Here comes the chamber-maid I sent for, and I will order rooms."

A bright-eyed negro girl stood in the doorway, courtesying and waiting orders.

In a few words the lady gave them.

The girl went away to obey them.

And in ten minutes Drusilla found herself in a small, clean, warm room, where she unloosed her clothes and lay down upon the bed, and, overcome by fatigue and excitement, fell fast asleep.

"Well, thank the Goodness Gracious for that. But who in the world would have thought it?" said mammy, as she quietly closed the shutters and darkened the room, and sat down to watch by her patient to try to guard her from disturbance until the carriage should come.

But the landlord's hour stretched to two, and still the carriage did not appear and still the sleeper slept on.

At last, however, mammy heard the sound of wheels.

She went to the window, cautiously unclosed the shutters, looked out, and saw the most dilapidated old carryall she had ever set her eyes upon approaching the house.

"That's it! and a purty object it is!" said mammy, as she went and looked to see what time it was by her mistress's watch that lay upon the dressing-table. It was a quarter past five.

"Oh, dear me!" said the old woman in dismay, "when she finds out how late it is, and she so anxious to be off, she'll just go and fling herself into fits, and then there! Let see! I gwine save her all that, and 'ceive her for her own good."

And so saying, mammy opened the watch and turned back the hands from a quarter *past five* to a quarter *to four*.

Then she stole out of the room and told the waiter to bring a cup of tea and a round of toast up-stairs quicker than he ever did anything in his life before.

Then she went back to her patient, lamenting that she must wake up out of such a refreshing sleep.

But to her surprise and satisfaction, she found Drusilla already up and standing before the dressing-table, looking at her watch.

"Oh, ma'am, are you awake? I'm so glad you got your sleep out! You *did* get it out, didn't you, honey? Nobody waked you, did they?"

No, nurse, I woke because I had slept long enough; and I feel much strengthened and quite equal to pursue my journey. It is ten minutes to four. I am so glad I didn't oversleep myself. I suppose the carriage will be here soon."

"The carriage has almost just this minute come, and a purty ramshackyly old concern it is too."

"Never mind, nurse, so that it will take me to my destination. Come, help me to dress quickly. Dear me, what a very dark afternoon," said Drusilla, going nearer the window for light.

"Yes, ma'am, the clouds do make it very dark indeed," said mammy, smiling in her sleeve at the deception she had played off upon her mistress—"but here, ma'am, here comes the waiter with lights and the tea-tray," she added, as she arose and set out a little table.

"I have no time to spend in eating and drinking," said Drusilla, as she hastily put on her bonnet.

"But you must keep up your strength, ma'am," urged mammy leading her charge to the table and making her sit down at it, while she herself poured out a cup of tea and handed it to her.

"Nurse," said Drusilla, as she received the cup from

the old woman, "I shall leave you here in charge of the —*two little red morocco trunks*—until I return.

"My goodness, honey, you will never think of going alone?"

"I must, nurse. There is no reason why I should not. I feel quite equal to the ride. I am going to see my husband."

"Well honey, I know if you will do a thing, *you will do it!*" When will you send for me and the luggage, honey?"

"I may *come* for you and the luggage even to-night."

"No, you mustn't, indeed! No use for you to do that, nyther. I reckon I ain't afraid to stay alone in a decent inn all night for once in a night."

"Very well, nurse; then you may expect me to come or send for you to-morrow. And now here is my purse—do you pay the landlord and make yourself comfortable. I am going now," said Drusilla, rising to put on her waterproof cloak.

The nurse helped her on with that and with her overshoes, and then accompanied her down-stairs and saw her safely into the carryall.

"And here's your umberel, honey. And you driver boy, when the madam gets out, you be sure to hoist the umberel and hold it over her head to 'vent her getting wet."

"All right, ma'am, I won't forget to do it," said the lad cracking his whip, starting his old horse, and making the dilapidated vehicle rattle and shake, at every turn of the wheels, as if it would drop to pieces.

Drusilla sat back in her seat, uncomfortably jolted in the miserable old carriage over that rough road, until, when about a mile from the house, it actually and hopelessly broke down.

When Drusilla was sure of this mishap, she took off her bonnet, drew the hood of her waterproof cloak over her head, and set forth to walk the distance to Old Lyon Hall.

Of that heroic effort, and of its successful issue—her safe arrival—the reader is already informed.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE DESPERATE REMEDY.

Let that pass, too. There breathes not one,
Who would not do as I have done.—BYRON.

THE bride-elect listened to the words of the forsaken wife, first in surprise and incredulity, then in pity and indignation and last in a rapture of relief, ineffable and indescribable, and only to be equalled by the ecstasy a condemned criminal must feel when at the last moment before execution he receives a full pardon.

When all was told, Drusilla sat pale and despairing, Anna flushed and resolute.

"Not for myself," said the poor young wife, not for myself. Heaven knows, and not for you, but for his sake have I done this thing—to save him from doing, in his madness, a deed that the law might construe into a crime and punish with degradation. But oh, Miss Lyon, forgive me if in coming here I have brought you much sorrow!"

"Hush! you have brought me no sorrow, but a great deliverance," said Anna with a sigh of infinite relief.

"Then you never loved him—as I do!" exclaimed Drusilla, raising her large eyes, full of questioning wonder, to the face of Anna.

Miss Lyon smiled haughtily, for all reply.

"That, at least, is well," mused the young wife.

Anna arose, still flushed and resolute.

"Give me that document of which you spoke, my child," she said, extending her hand.

Drusilla drew from her bosom the little black silk bag, took from it the piece of paper in question, and laid it before Anna.

Anna read it over, with smiling eyes and a curling lip.

"Does it prove or disprove my marriage?" anxiously inquired Drusilla.

"I cannot tell, Drusilla; I do not know. But so much is certain—*your* fate, Alick's, and your unborn child's,

and also my fate and Dick's—all hang upon this precious little piece of paper, for which I would not take a mint of money," said Anna, earnestly.

"And yet you cannot tell me whether it proves or disproves my marriage."

"No; for I am not sufficiently learned in the law," said Anna, moving towards the door.

"You are going out!" said Drusilla, uneasily.

"Yes; stay here until I come back, which will be in a few minutes."

"Oh, Miss Lyon! Miss Lyon, do not go to him yet! And do not upbraid him when you see him! Your provocation may have been very great, but wait until you are cool, and then you will be just," pleaded the young wife, rising and laying her hands upon the lady's robes, to stay her.

"Child, I am not going to him. And I shall *never* upbraid him," replied Anna, with a superb and beautiful scorn.

"Then you go——?"

"To my grandfather's study!"

"To denounce him to his uncle? Oh, do not—not yet, not just yet! Wait, wait till you are calm! till you can speak only the words of justice and mercy. Do not denounce him yet!"

"Drusilla, I am not going to denounce him now or ever. Wait *you*, and see what I shall do!"

"What, what?"

"I shall save the miserable sinner, if he is to be saved at all!"

"But, how? oh, how?"

"Wait *you*, and trust me!" answered Anna, flashing out of the room and taking the mysterious little document with her.

She walked—no, in the exhilaration of her spirits, she almost danced down the hall, towards her grandfather's little study, over the great entrance.

As she tripped on she noticed the chamber-doors on each side wide open, and the fire-light within shining down on the polished dark oak floors. In many of the rooms, the chamber-maids were putting on fresh logs.

"I think you need not take that trouble. I fancy there

will be no wedding guests here to-night," said Anna, smiling, as she passed them.

"Mr. Richard has come, Miss," replied one of the women.

"Ah!" exclaimed Anna, stopping short with a beating heart. A few seconds she paused to recover composure, and then she rushed on.

"Well, my darling! have you come to show yourself to me in all your bridal glory, before you go down to be married? Ah! truly, you look very beautiful, my Anna. May Heaven make your spirit even more beautiful than its outward form," said the fine old soldier, reaching out his hand to his granddaughter, as she entered his room, and drawing her towards him.

"I am very glad that you are pleased with me, grandfather," she said, as she seated herself on his knee.

"You look happier now, my Anna, than you did half an hour ago."

"I feel happier, dear sir."

"And what makes the difference?" he smiled.

"'A change has come over the spirit of my dream;' that is all," laughed Anna.

"Ah, my dear! feminine caprice, but I am glad of it. Well, you are ready, Alick is ready, I am ready, and Dick is here; but we have no bridesmaid and no minister."

"Yes, grandpa, we have a bridesmaid!"

"Ah! I am glad of that! Which of the six young ladies is it who has braved the storm for love of you?"

"Annie," answered Miss Lyon, evasively, meaning our Anna Drusilla, but wishing her grandpa to understand another Anna, as he did, for he immediately exclaimed,

"Ah! little Annie Seymour! Well, she lived nearest! and she must answer for the whole six. But, my dear, the carriage has not yet returned with the minister."

"The way is long and the roads are very bad. Doubtless he will come; but it may be late. Was there a special license got out for us, dear grandpa?" inquired Anna, speaking with assumed carelessness.

"Why, of course, there was, my dear!" answered the old soldier, elevating his eyebrows in astonishment, at the question.

"Who got it, dear grandpa?"

"Why, Alick, to be sure! who else?"

"Who has it now, sir?"

"Bless my soul what an inquisitive little puss. What is it to you who has it? Are you afraid it is not all right? Would you like to inspect it for yourself?" laughed the General.

"If you please; yes, sir, I should," answered Anna, archly.

"Lest there should be any informality in it, eh?"

"Such things have happened, sir; but it is not the fear of that which prompts me; for I have always had a curiosity to look at a special marriage license; so if Alick has it, please get it from him, that I may gratify this wish. I only want it for a few minutes."

"Well, of all the whims of whimsical women, yours is certainly the most absurd!"

"Will you get the license away from Alick, and let me look at it, grandpa?"

"You persist in this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, fortunately, I have not got to go to Alick with such a ridiculous request as the loan of a license. I have it here with me."

"You have it?"

"Yes. You see Alick, thinking from the state of the weather, and the looks of things generally, that he should have no groomsman for the ceremony, put his marriage license and the minister's fee both in one envelope, and requested me, when the proper time should come, to hand it over to Dr. Barbar. But, now I hear that Dick has arrived—having so far conquered himself as to come to the wedding. I mean to conscript him into the service, arm him with this paper, and make him do duty as groomsman."

"Where is the packet, dear grandpa?"

"Here, my dear, since you must need see the license (which the officiating clergyman scarcely ever does, as he takes its contents for granted), you may read it at your leisure, while I go down-stairs and inquire if my messenger has returned from the parsonage," said General Lyon, as he handed a white embossed envelope to the bride elect, and then left the room.

She sank down into an easy-chair and opened the envelope, which of course was not sealed. She took out the marriage license, in which she found folded a five hundred dollar bank note.

With a curling lip and flashing eyes she read over the form of license, and then with a smile of scorn and triumph, she put it on the glowing fire and watched it blaze up and burn to ashes.

Then she took that mysterious little document given her by Drusilla, wrapped it around the big bank-note and put both in the envelope and folded it neatly.

"Now, Mr. Alexander Lyon, whoever you may marry to-night, you will certainly not marry me!" she mused maliciously, as she sat and waited for her grandfather's return. Presently she heard footsteps coming up the corridor; but they were not those of the old General.

She arose to her feet and her heart stood still.

Dick Hammond entered.

"Anna! You here? Pardon me, I expected only to find my uncle," he exclaimed, in a voice vibrating with emotion.

"Dick! dear Dick! you are welcome! Shake hands, Dick. No, take it! it is a free hand now. I know all, Dick!" exclaimed Anna, trembling with excess of agitation.

He clasped her hand and carried it to his lips.

"I came here to tell your grandfather everything and to prove all that I should tell. But I have been anticipated."

"Yes, Drusilla is here."

"I knew she was on her way. I came a night's journey with her in the coach. But I saw that she tried to escape recognition by me; for what reason I could not guess; so, not to trouble her with my presence, in the morning I got off the coach and took another route. I feared that she would not be able to continue her journey."

"She arrived this evening," said Anna, calmly.

"And she has told you all?"

"All."

"And *what* does your grandfather think of this?"

"He does not know it."

"How? not know it?"

"No, Dick. Drusilla told me only. I have not told my grandfather, nor do I intend to do so."

"Then I myself I will denounce the scoundrel to my uncle," exclaimed Hammond, shaking with passion.

"No, Dick, we will not denounce him. We will do a deal better than that. Listen, Dick: My dear old grandpa says he intends to conscript you into the service to do duty as groomsman."

"He does!" exclaimed Hammond, with his eyes flashing.

"Yes, and, Dick, you must consent."

"Consent! I consent! Anna, do you mean this iniquitous marriage to go on?"

"Yes, I do. And Dick, you must be groomsman and hand the license and the fee both over to the minister. See, here they are in this pretty envelope. Grandpa got it ready for you. So, Dick, you must do it."

"If I do, may I be eternally consigned to the deepest pit in——"

—"Hush, Dick, and don't go off at a tangent. Look me in the face, sir! right in the eyes!"

"Anna, what do you mean?" he inquired, meeting her steady gaze.

"Do you see anything 'iniquitous' in my countenance?" she asked.

"No; but I see a mystery there."

"A holy mystery, as I suppose a 'pious fraud' may be called. Now, sir, will you open this envelope, which is to be entrusted to you, to be delivered to the minister, and examine its contents?"

"Why," said Dick in perplexity, as he looked at the enclosure, "this is——"

"Yes, it *is*. I have taken advantage of my grandpa's absence to burn my marriage license and substitute this one. And *you* must hand it enclosed in the envelope with the fee, to the minister, when we stand up to be married. And *now*, Dick, do you begin to see daylight?" laughed Anna.

"I think I do. Yet I do not quite comprehend yet. You mean——"

"Here comes my grandfather, and we have not a min-

ute more for explanation. Play the part assigned to you —blindly, if you must—and trust me with the issue. Will you, Dick?"

"Yes, I WILL, Anna."

"And Dick, here, listen quick!—Just before I am to be sent for, go down into the great drawing-room and put out two-thirds of the wax candles. I want a subdued light, not an illumination there. Will you remember, Dick, and do it yourself, so as to insure its being done?"

"Yes, Anna, I will; and now I *do* begin to understand you."

"Hush, here he is!" whispered Miss Lyon, as her grandfather came to the door.

"Ah, Dick, my dear boy! how are you? so glad to see you!" exclaimed old General Lyon, entering and holding out his hand to Richard Hammond, who took and pressed it affectionately.

"So very glad to see you here, Dick! Your very first visit to Old Lyon Hall! And now I shall expect you to stay and comfort me when my young people are gone."

"I shall be very happy to do so, sir," answered Dick, sincerely.

"But how the deuce did you find your way here, through this wilderness of a country, and over these dreadful roads?"

"Oh, I inquired of your protégés, the old Scotch emigrants, at the turnpike gate," answered Dick, laughing.

"Old Andy and Jenny. Ay, poor souls! Well, Dick, you are here in a good hour. All our guests have failed us—groomsmen, and bridesmaids, and all, except little Annie Seymour. And so you must play groomsman, and lead Annie down."

"I shall be very happy to do so, sir, if Alick desires it."

"Oh, yes, he does. I heard that you were here, and so I looked in at Alick's room and mentioned the matter to him. And he declared that he would be very much obliged if you would do him so much honor. So, you will see it is all right."

"Yes, sir."

"And here, Dick, is the license and the fee, both in this envelope, which it will be your duty as groomsman to hand to the officiating minister."

"Yes, sir."

"And, by the way, I hear wheels, and his carriage must be coming," said the old gentleman, leaving the study to inquire.

Meanwhile, the bride-elect had returned to her own room.

Drusilla still sat there in the easy-chair, with her hands clasped upon her lap and her head bowed upon her breast.

Anna went and took a seat beside her, and said, with earnestness almost amounting to solemnity:

"Drusilla, if you wish to save Alick from guilt and remorse, and yourself and your child from wrong and shame you must place your destiny in my hands to-night, and do as I direct you."

The helpless young wife looked up in the lady's face, and murmured mournfully:

"It is a great trust you seek, Miss Lyon."

"It *is*, Drusilla, a very great trust; yet I seek it. It is also for you a very great trial, yet I ask you to meet it."

"I would meet anything for Alick's sake, Miss Lyon, if I may save him, as you say. Please to explain yourself, Miss Lyon," she said.

"Drusilla, you know that Alexander Lyon is waiting and expecting to marry me to-night," said the bride elect.

"Yes," moaned the wronged wife.

"And my grandfather and his household are equally waiting and expecting to witness a wedding."

"Yes."

"Well, they must not any of them be disappointed."

"Ah, what do you mean?" inquired Drusilla, with an anxious sigh.

"Not to marry Alick myself, you may rest assured," answered Anna, disdainfully.

"Ah, no, for you could not do that."

"Of course not, as I consider him already married. You are his wife, in right, if not in law, Drusilla," said Miss Lyon, emphatically.

"I *know* I am so by right, and I *believe* I am so by law," answered Drusilla solemnly.

"Yet those who know more of law than we do differ from us. And this makes your position, Drusilla, very doubtful, very unsafe, and deeply humiliating."

"I know it, I feel it, through all my darkened spirit and in every pulse of my breaking heart."

"This state of affairs should not be permitted to exist for a moment, especially—oh, most especially—as you are so soon to be a mother. No question of the lawfulness of your union with Alexander Lyon should be permitted to arise."

"No, no, no!"

"But how to silence such questions forever, how to legalize your union and legitimatize your child—there is the difficulty."

Drusilla moaned, but spoke no word in answer.

"If I were to go now to Alick and tell him of your presence in the house, and urge him to resign my hand and to do you justice, he would not hear me."

"No, he would not," wailed Drusilla.

"If I were to appeal to my grandfather, the high-spirited old soldier would—kick him out doors!"

"Ah!" gasped Drusilla, pierced more sharply by this idea of prospective insult to her Alick than she could be by any ignominy that might cover herself.

"Then what is to be done?" inquired Anna.

"Nothing, nothing," sighed Drusilla. "I wish I were dead. I wish I were in Heaven!"

"Yes; but you see we can't die just when the whim seizes us; and if we could, we shouldn't go to Heaven by *that* means."

"Ah, Heaven have mercy! have mercy on me, for my state is desperate!"

"Yes, Drusilla, your state *is* desperate—desperate enough to drive you to despair."

"Despair! I have lived in it for months. I shall die in it!"

"If you do you will never see Heaven at all. For despair is the last and most fatal of sins. But you needn't give up to it just yet!"

"Oh, what do you mean? What hope have I in this world?"

"The hope that lasts as long as life. Listen, Drusilla. I said that your state was desperate—not that your cause was lost. 'Desperate cases require desperate remedies.' Your case is such a one, and my remedy is such a one."

"What remedy have you for me? However desperate,

however dangerous, I will not refuse it or shrink from it! I would dare anything, suffer anything, to save my Alick from his sin and win him back to me again!" said the devoted wife, clasping her hands and gazing imploringly into the eyes of the lady who seemed now to hold her destiny.

"Then attend to me, Drusilla, while I divulge my plan—the *only* plan by which you can save your Alick from present guilt and future remorse, and yourself and your child from the greatest wrong and the deepest shame—the only plan, Drusilla, by which you may hope to WIN YOUR WAY!"

"Speak on, tell me! I listen!" gasped Drusilla, in a breathless voice.

"Well, as I said before, Alexander Lyon is confidently hoping to lead his bride before the minister this evening. His hopes must be fulfilled—in you, Drusilla!"

"In me!"

"Yes, in you! You must enact the bride this evening."

"In the name of Heaven, what is this that you are proposing to me?" exclaimed Drusilla, gazing in wonder at Miss Lyon.

"That you shall take my place in this evening's solemn farce and be fast married to your husband, if you never were before," said Anna, calmly.

"Impossible, Miss Lyon! He would reject me at first sight, and I!—I should die of mortification!"

"Yes, if he should be permitted to recognize you, he might reject you. But he is not to be favored with a sight of your face until he is irrecoverably bound to you."

"Even then he would renounce me—renounce me with maledictions."

"Well, let him! I should thank him for freeing me if I were you. Why should you care, so that his great wrong to you and to his child is righted—so that your good name is redeemed from unmerited reproach, and your innocent child from undeserved shame? After you are fast married—let him go, if he will, say I!"

"Oh, Miss Lyon! Miss Lyon! I never deceived any one in all my life! Shall I begin by deceiving my dear Alick?" she said, wringing her poor little hands again.

"Drusilla, this will be no deception, but a pious fraud—if ever there was such a thing in the world!"

"Oh, Miss Lyon, you mean well; but I could not practise this 'pious fraud' upon any one, least of all upon my dear Alick! I could not, Miss Lyon, I could not!" fervently exclaimed the loyal young creature, tightly clasping her hands.

"Then you accept the dishonor to which he has doomed you, rather than clear your fame in the manner I propose?" said Anna, curling her lovely lip.

"Yes, Miss Lyon, yes; rather than force myself in this way upon my dear Alick, if I have really no right to his name, I will accept the undeserved shame," said Drusilla, sadly but firmly, while the devotion of a young martyr glowed through her beautiful pale face.

Anna nodded her head two or three times, and then said:

"So be it. You may have the right to immolate yourself upon this idolatrous altar of your inordinate ffaections. But who, I pray you, young mother, who gave you the right to doom your innocent unborn child, your poor little helpless child, to the deep degradation of illegitimacy?" demanded Miss Lyon, solemnly fixing her eyes upon the face of Drusilla, and seeing her mouth tremble and the big tears roll bead-like, down her cheeks.

"Hush! oh, in pity, hush, Miss Lyon! Do not speak of this!" she pleaded.

"But I must and will speak of it!" persisted Anna, who now discovered that she had touched a chord in Drusilla's heart, through which she might draw her into the proposed plan.

And though the poor, wronged girl wept and wrung her hands, Miss Lyon persevered in pleading this cause, mercilessly setting before the young mother the shames and woes that must attend her child through life, should she persist in her present resolution.

Of course, Anna gained her point.

"For the poor baby's sake, I consent. Do with me as you will," said Drusilla, weeping bitterly.

"That is right. Come now and let me dress you. We have taken up too much time in talking. We have very little left. I expect every moment to hear that the minister has arrived," said Anna.

And she flew to the chamber-door, and turned the key.

And she quickly took off her bridal robes, and carefully dressed Drusilla in them.

Then she placed the wreath of orange blossoms on her head, and laid the veil of white lace over all.

"There," said Anna, giving her a pair of white kid gloves, "put these on while I dress as a bridesmaid—for while you personate Miss Lyon, I must seem to be Miss Seymour."

Just at that moment, some one rapped softly.

Anna flew to answer the summons.

"Well, what is wanted now?" she inquired, without opening the door.

"If you please, Miss, the Reverend Dr. Barbar have come, and Mr. Alick and Mr. Dick is both waitin'; and Master's compliments, and is you and Miss Annie ready to come down?" spoke the voice of Marcy from without.

"No, we are not quite ready yet, but we soon shall be. Miss Annie is dressing. Ask them to come for us in about fifteen minutes," said Anna.

She then hurried to her wardrobes and bureaus, selected from her large outfit of clothing a white taffeta-silk dress, and a large white tulle veil, and quickly and carefully disguised herself in them. So much dispatch did she use that she, as well as Drusilla, was ready and waiting full five minutes before the summons came for them.

"Courage now, my dear child! Remember how much is at stake, how much depends upon your self-possession. Draw your veil closely over your face. I will do the same with mine. They will ascribe this to our bashfulness. You must take Alick's arm, I shall take Dick's. Never mind if your hands tremble or your tongue falters—it will seem natural. Come now!" whispered Anna to her agitated companion, as she led her to the chamber-door and opened it.

Alick and Dick stood outside.

"My adored Anna, this is the happiest moment of my existence!" gallantly whispered Alick, as he took the half-offered hand of Drusilla, pressed it fervently to his lips, and drew it within his arm.

She bowed in silence. It seemed all that was expected of a bride under the circumstances.

"Miss Seymour, I believe? Yes? Well, I am very glad to meet you again, Miss Annie, especially on this auspicious occasion," said Dick, bending low over the hand of

Anna, and then drawing it within his own and leading her after the bride and bridegroom who were walking before.

"Dick," whispered Anna, "are we both well disguised?"

"Excellently," returned Mr. Dick.

"Did you partially darken the room by putting out two thirds of the lights?"

"I nearly quite darkened it by putting out three quarters of them. I had a good opportunity of doing it, being alone in the drawing-room while Alick and the parson were closeted with the governor. He—the governor I mean—swore a few at the servants when he came down by himself to see that all was right. But the servants all declared ignorance of the cause of the lights going out, and as it was too late to remedy the evil he did not attempt it."

"Thanks, Dick. And now you understand my purpose; have you confidence in me?"

"In your sincerity, *yes:* but in your success, *no.* I tremble for you, Anna, lest when all is done you should find yourself fast married to Alick. I do, indeed, Anna!"

"How foolish of you, Dick. Why, I burned the license."

"I know you did, Anna; but—I wish you would keep as far as possible from the side of Alick Lyon when he stands before a minister who holds a prayer-book in his hands open at the marriage service!"

"Be at ease, Dick, I shall place Alick's wife between me and him. I shall consider her an insurmountable obstacle."

"Hush, Anna, we must not talk more! we are too near them," whispered Dick, in a very low tone as they came up very close behind the foremost couple.

And what were Drusilla's feelings when she found herself again by her Alick's side, her hand drawn closely within his protecting arm, and pressed frequently against his beating heart—knowing, as she did, that he was then meditating against her the deepest wrong man could inflict upon woman—feeling, as she did, that every caress bestowed upon her, in his ignorance of her identity, was intended for another; and going, as she was, to take from him, by a holy stratagem, those sacred rights of which he had so cruelly deprived her; and to brave and bear his terrible anger when that stratagem should be discovered, as it must be when the rites should be over—what were her feelings?

A great medical philosopher has written that " Nature is before art with her anesthetics."

And Drusilla's present state was an illustration of this. In the supreme crisis of her fate she scarcely realized her position. She was like one partially overcome by ether or chloroform; her head was ringing, her senses whirling, her reason tottering; she went on as a somnambulist, half conscious of her state, but unable to awake. It may be doubtful whether she would now have retreated if she could; but it is quite certain that she *could not* have done so even if she would. She was under a potent spell that hurried her forward with all the irresistible force of destiny.

The drawing-room doors were thrown open. The little bridal procession passed in.

The room, thanks to Dick, was very dimly lighted.

Upon the rug, with his back to the fire, and facing the advancing party, stood the officiating clergyman in his surplice.

Near him was the grand and martial figure of the veteran soldier, General Lyon.

At a respectful distance stood a group of the old family servants.

The bridal party came on and formed before the minister—Alexander and Drusilla stood together in the center; on Alexander's right stood Richard, on Drusilla's left stood Anna.

All were reverently silent.

At a signal from General Lyon, Richard Hammond put the envelope supposed to contain the license and the fee into the hands of the minister, who merely, as a matter of form, glanced over it and then opened his book and began the sacred rite by reading the solemn exhortation with which they commence.

The old, loving servants, who had hitherto kept at a reverential distance from their masters, now drew as near the scene of action as they dared do, so that they might hear every syllable of the ceremony that was to unite, as they supposed, their young mistress to the husband of her choice.

When the minister, in the course of his reading, came to these awful words—awful at least, to one of the contracting parties, he delivered them with great effect.

"'If any man can show just cause, why these may not be joined together, let him now speak, or else hereafter forever hold his peace.'"

The minister made the usual formal pause, for the answer that might often come, but never does; and then, with the most solemn emphasis, he addressed the pair before him:

"'I require and charge *you*, BOTH, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of *you* know any impediment, why you may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured, that if any persons are joined together, otherwise than God's Word doth allow, their marriage is not lawful.'"

As the minister read this dread adjuration, the face of the bridegroom was observed to flush and pale, and his form to tremble and shake as with a sudden ague fit.

But though the minister made the customary pause, no one spoke.

And the ceremony proceeded.

"'Alexander, wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?'" et cetera.

And the bridegroom answered in a firm and almost defiant voice:

"'I WILL.'"

The clergyman continued:

"'Anna, wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband?'" and so forth.

And the bride, Anna Drusilla, faltered in whispering tones:

"'*I will.*'"

"'Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?'" was the next question in the ritual.

"'I do,'" answered the sonorous voice of old General Lyon, as he came forward, took the hand of the bride and placed it in that of the minister.

Then the brave old soldier stepped back and turned away his head, to hide the tears that filled those eyes which had never quailed in the battle's deadliest brawl; though they wept now, at his giving away as he supposed the last darling of his old age.

But the minister was now joining the hands of the pair before him.

And bridegroom and bride, in their turn plighted their troth each to the other.

Alick uttered his vows in the firm and rather defiant tones in which he had made all his responses.

Anna Drusilla breathed hers in murmurs low as the softest notes of the Æolian harp.

Then the ring was given and received.

The last prayers were said; the benediction was given. and the pair was pronounced to be man and wife.

Alexander turned gaily and gallantly to salute his bride.

Miss Lyon, as bridesmaid, lifted the veil.

And the faithless husband stood face to face with the forsaken wife!

"'DRUSILLA!!'"

He uttered but that one word, and reeled backward, white and ghastly, as if stricken by death.

Drusilla stood pale and mute her head sunk upon her bosom, her hands hanging by her side.

The parson, in his panic, dropped his prayer-book, and stood gazing in consternation.

General Lyon bent forward in astonishment and perplexity.

Dick was looking on in amusement.

And Anna smiling in triumph.

CHAPTER XLVII.

EXPOSURE.

> Away! upon this earth beneath
> There is no spot where thou and I,
> Together for an hour could breathe.—BYRON.

GENERAL LYON was the first to break the ominous silence. Turning to the bridegroom, he sternly demanded:

"Sir! what is the meaning of this?"

"Ask your beautiful granddaugther, sir, who, doubtless to serve her own pleasure, has lent herself to the basest fraud ever practised upon a man," answered Alexander, now livid with suppressed rage.

The old gentleman looked gravely upon the laughing face of Anna, and inquired, sadly:

What is this that you have done, my child?"

Miss Lyon hesitated and looked confused.

"Pray, my dear sir," said Dick Hammond, taking advantage of the pause and advancing to her rescue, "let *me* explain this humiliating affair."

"So *you* were in it, were you?" fiercely exclaimed Alexander confronting Richard. "All right! here is *one*, at least whom I can and will call to a severe account."

"I am quite ready," coolly replied Dick, "to admit and answer for my share in this matter?"

"Dick! hold your tongue! How dare you, sir? This is *my* thunder! And if you open your mouth again without leave, I'll—discard you forever! Stand back, sir!" exclaimed Anna, with her blue eyes blazing upon the offender.

He retreated as from before a fire, and stood laughing.

"My dear grandfather," said Anna, turning towards the veteran soldier, "this is solely *my* affair. May I speak without interruption?"

"Yes, Miss Lyon," answered the old gentleman, with grave dignity, "I wait to hear."

"Then, sir, in a very few words, I will resolve the whole mystery. You must know that at the time Mr. Alexander Lyon sought the hand of your granddaughter, he had already a living wife, or one who believed herself to be so!"

"It is false!" burst forth from Alexander's livid lips—'as false as——! My cousin has been deceived!"

"It is as true as truth. I will prove it to be so!" put in Richard Hammond.

"Dick! what did I tell you? If you speak again, I will have you turned out!" exclaimed Anna, who was most anxious to prevent a collision between the two young men.

"He had a wife living and sought your hand!" exclaimed the gallant old soldier, slowly turning his eyes from Anna to Alick, and back again. "My child, you must mistake. Such were the act of a scoundrel, and none such ever bore the name of Lyon."

"Sir!" cried Alexander, in a voice thrilled and a countenance agonized by shame—"Sir, hear me, hear one word of my defence before you utterly condemn me! I do not, any more than yourself, understand this strange

scene, which seems to have been got up as a very bad joke against me. But—that my name *is* Lyon should be an all-sufficient guarantee that I am no scoundrel, and quite incapable of seeking to wed one woman while legally bound to another."

"That is a denial, not a defence," coldly replied General Lyon.

"Then, sir," said Alexander, withdrawing a few paces from the group and signaling to General Lyon to follow him—I have to confess to somewhat of human frailty in order to exculpate myself from the charge of crime."

"Go on, sir," curtly commanded the old gentleman, who had come to his side.

Poor Drusilla had lifted her head, which had rested upon the bosom of Anna, and bent slightly forward to hear her fate.

"Will you proceed, sir?" sternly inquired the General, seeing that his nephew hesitated.

"It is an unpleasant story to tell. But lest you should have cause to think worse of me than I deserve, I must admit that the young person here has been my companion for a few months of youthful indiscretion; but there was no marriage."

"*Oh, Alick! Alick! Oh! Alick! my Alick!*" impulsively burst from the pale lips of Drusilla with a low, long-drawn wail of sorrow.

But Anna once more put her arms around the feeble form, and drew the bowed head down upon her supporting bosom.

"Well, sir, what then?" severely demanded the General.

"I must admit," said Alexander, with a flushed brow, and with some compunction awakened by the voice of her whom he had once loved, and with much shame at having to make the confession—"I must admit that, though there really was none, yet the poor girl supposed there was a marriage, since there was a semblance of one."

"What, sir!" thundered the grand old soldier, "deceive a maiden with the 'semblance' of a marriage and call yourself a Lyon?"

"Again you mistake me, sir!" cried Alexander, a hot blush rushing over his face. "I also believed at the time it was performed that the ceremony which united us was a legal one. I continued to believe so, even after the

hallucination which led to the false and fatal step had passed away—continued to believe so until last March, when I chanced to discover that by the accidental omission of an important form my marriage with this girl was illegal."

"And of course, sir, having discovered such an error, you took the earliest opportunity of rectifying it and making your marriage legal?" said General Lyon, emphatically.

"Ah, sir! have I not told you that the illusion which lured me to the folly of such a misalliance was past and gone? No, sir, I was too happy to be free to retrieve my errors, and to come back, as in duty bound, to my first love and first faith," said Alexander, turning and bowing deeply to Anna, who drew herself proudly erect and bent upon him a look of ineffable contempt.

"*Oh, Alick! my, Alick!*" breathed Drusilla, in an almost expiring voice.

"Hush, dear child, hush! Don't you see and hear that he is utterly beneath your love and regret?" whispered Miss Lyon, tenderly drawing the young bowed head upon her shoulder and pressing the poor broken heart to her bosom.

"Proceed, sir!" said General Lyon, scowling darkly.

"There is little more to say but this," muttered Alexander, in an intensely mortified and irritated tone. "From the moment in which I discovered the illegality of my union with this girl, of course I broke with her—not harshly, but very gently. From that moment I treated her only as a sister, and visited her with less and less frequency until I ceased altogether. Until this hour, I assure you, my dear sir, I had not seen this girl for months, in fact not since April last. I meant never to see her again, but I took measures to provide handsomely for her future support. Such, my dear uncle, is the 'head and front of my offending'—a boyish error, heedlessly fallen into, deeply repented of and eagerly atoned for. It is seldom that a young man's follies are so cruelly exposed as mine have been this evening," added Alexander, with an injured air.

"And this is your explanation?" haughtily demanded the General.

"It is. For the girl's sake I would willingly have concealed the circumstance; but in the present state of affairs I deemed the explanation due to yourself as well as to my

lovely cousin," replied Alexander, again turning with a bow to Anna, who again flashed back upon him a look of fiery scorn.

"But how comes this unhappy young woman here, sir?" severely inquired General Lyon.

"I beg to refer that question to the young woman herself, or to her two confederates, Miss Lyon and Mr. Hammond," replied Alexander, making a sweeping bow that included the whole circle, and then stepping back.

"How came this hapless young creature here, Anna?" questioned the old man, turning to his granddaughter.

"Permit me, if you please, to answer," said Richard Hammond, coming forward.

"Dick! be silent! If you speak again tell I bid you, I will never speak to *you* again! This is *my* thunder, I tell you, and you have nothing to do with it. Grandpa, order him to be still!"

"Be quiet, Richard. Proceed, Anna!"

"Then listen, sir. You must know that this poor child, living alone in the isolated country house where her husband had immured her, suspected nothing of his wicked addresses to me until the day before yesterday, when suddenly she received authentic information—no matter from whom——"

"It was from——" began Richard.

"Hold your tongue, Dick! She received authentic information, I say, of his intended marriage with me. Believing herself as I believe her to be, his wife in law, as she is in right, and wishing to save him from the sin he meditated and the punishment she feared would be its consequence, willing also to save me from the precipice of ruin upon which I unconsciously stood, this young fragile creature, notwithstanding her delicate health and broken heart, all unfit as she was to travel, came by stage coach the whole distance from Washington to Saulsburg, and finding no conveyance there, walked all the way through this dreadful weather on this dark night, over the worst roads in the country, from Saulsburg to this house. She came to me in my chamber, privately told me her story, shielding her faithless husband as much as she could; and she besought me to withdraw from the marriage, and save him from guilt and myself from fatal wrong."

"Then why has she attempted to force herself upon me

in this shameless manner? And why have you aided and abetted her in the fraud?" fiercely demanded Alexander, his temper impetuously breaking through all his efforts to maintain a proud composure.

Anna disdained to reply to him. Not one syllable would she condescend to address to Alexander Lyon. But turning again to her grandfather she said——

"Drusilla did not do so; she will never attempt to force herself upon Mr. Lyon. The young wife came, as I said, to save him from committing a felony, and me from taking a fatal step; and not to force herself upon an unwilling husband. It will be well for him, when he shall come to himself, if he can by any means, woo her back."

"How happened it, then, my child?" inquired the General.

"It was I, who for reasons that will be apparent, urged her to assume my dress and take my place in the wedding ceremony, and thus win back the sacred rights of which she had been so basely cheated!"

"But still—how was this to be done in such a way, my dear?"

"By rectifying in this second marriage the informality that rendered the first one illegal."

"And I contend," burst forth Alexander, "that this second marriage is no more legal than the first one was *less* so, if anything! for this is an imposture, a substitution of one person for another, besides being quite as irregular as the first marriage in the same particular of lacking a license!"

"He mistakes, my dear grandfather, there was a license," said Anna, quietly.

"Yes; a license authorizing the marriage of Alexander and Anna Lyon. Such was the document placed in the hands of the minister!" angrily exclaimed Alick.

"I *beg* his pardon," said Anna, still looking at, still speaking to her grandfather. "The license of which *he* speaks I burned with my own hands this evening. The license of which *I* speak duly authorizes the nuptial rites to be solemnized between Alexander Lyon and Anna Drusilla Sterling, and it is now in the possession of the minister."

"It was then taken out by somebody else in my name. It can be of no sort of legal effect," cried Mr. Lyon.

"Again I entreat his forgiveness; but this one was procured by Alexander Lyon himself, dear grandpa."

"It is FALSE!—I mean it is a mistake, Anna!" exclaimed Alexander, correcting himself, "I procured no such paper."

"I fancy that he has forgotten the circumstance, dear sir; but I will refresh his memory!" replied Anna. Then turning to the sorely embarrassed minister who had stood all this time an unwilling witness to this painful scene, she added: "Dr. Barbrr, will you have the goodness to return the envelope handed you by Mr. Hammond?"

The good clergyman complied. Anna opened the envelope, and took from it its inclosure, which she handed to General Lyon.

The old gentleman put on his spectacles to examine it. Having silently read it, he exclaimed:

"Why, this is—this is exactly what you represent it to be, my dear Anna! But it bears date—Heaven bless my soul, of last January!"

Alexander started and turned ghastly pale, reeled, and recovered himself by a great effort.

"How is this, my Anna? What does it all mean, my dear?" inquired the old soldier.

Alexander, putting a strong constraint upon himself, bent forward to hear the answer.

"It means this, my dear sir: You heard Mr. Lyon say that at the time of his first marriage with this fair child he supposed the union to be perfectly legal; but that afterwards he chanced to discover that through 'the accidental omission of an important form,' that ceremony to have been quite invalid."

"Yes! yes!" said General Lyon, impatiently.

"He had some reason for what he said. Listen, dear sir: When this man first prevailed over this poor child to intrust herself to his care, he seems to have meant honestly by her. He procured this license for their marriage; and he took her before a regularly ordained minister of the church. But by some strange oversight he never handed the license to the minister, who, being a Northern man and a new-comer into Virginia, and ignorant of the law of the State which required a license to be shown before a marriage ceremony could be legally solemnized, never asked to see the document, but married them, as he would have done in his own State, without it. Months later

Mr. Lyon discovered this oversight, and having tired of his fair bride, he resolved to profit by it in freeing himself from his obligations to her."

"And so this is the license he took out for his first marriage, but never used?" inquired General Lyon, who for the last few moments had maintained a wonderful composure.

"Yes, sir."

"But how came it into your possession?"

"Sir, the poor child found it among her husband's papers, and cherished it with a fond superstition, as she cherished her wedding ring. When she came to me with her piteous story she put that piece of paper into my hands as a proof that she was no impostor. I saw at once how it might be used to get her rights, especially as her first Christian name, like mine, is Anna. So I burned my own license and substituted hers and closed the envelope, which you, dear sir, unconscious of its contents, delivered into Dick's charge to be handed to the minister. Then, using such arguments as I thought must prevail over a wife and a Christian, I persuaded Drusilla to take my place, as I said. And now I am happy to announce that through my means, and mine only the omission of that important form in Drusilla's first marriage ceremony has been supplied in the second, and that she is now unquestionably the lawful wife of Alexander Lyon."

Drusilla lifted her head from Anna's supporting bosom, and looked at her husband where he stood, enraged, baffled and covered with confusion. Then she left Anna's sheltering arms and went towards him, and with outstretched hands, face pale as death, and beseeching eyes, she pleaded:

"Oh, Alick! Alick love! it was not for myself, it was not for myself I did this! Oh, Alick, try to pardon me, dear! and I will pray to die and set you free!"

And as if no one else had been present but themselves, she sank at his feet.

"BEGONE!" cried Alexander, furiously stamping, and turning away.

"Sir! you have disgraced yourself and the name you bear!" sternly exclaimed General Lyon, stooping and raising the poor little fallen figure, and supporting it on his arm.

But Alexander was absolutely beside himself with fury.

Forgetting that he stood in the presence of old age and young womanhood, forgetting that he was a man and a gentleman, he strode toward his heart-broken wife, and with livid face, starting eyes and brandishing hand, he exclaimed:

"How dared you do this thing? How dared you bring me to this open shame? How dared you brave me thus? How dared you, I demand?"

She did not speak; but with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, seemed to implore his forbearance.

"You have repaid years of kindness by the blackest ingratitude; you have deceived me by the most infamous treachery; you have sought your object by the basest fraud; you have ventured to take the place of the lady I loved and wished to wed, and so, stolen my hand by the meanest trick! I ask you where you found the effrontery to do all this?" he demanded, grinding his teeth with rage and shaking his hand over her head.

Still she uttered no word in her defence; but still with appealing hands and eyes, mutely besought his mercy.

Dick, who had been champing and stamping, and held in leash only by Anna, during this assault, now utterly broke bounds, and cried out:

"Come, come, Lyon! I'm blest if I'll stand by and see a lady brow-beaten so, if it is by her husband! If you don't stop this instantly, I'll——"

"Be quiet, Richard Hammond, and let the man speak to his wife," said General Lyon authoritatively, with covert irony, as he laid his hand on Dick and held him back.

Richard yielded, seeing in this unnatural forbearance of the old soldier, only the ominous calm that portends the fiercest storm.

But, as for Alexander Lyon, so absorbed was he by his own raging passions, that he perceived nothing of this bye scene. Still brandishing his hand above her drooping head, he continued to pour out his wrath upon his wife.

"You never loved me! You never loved anyone but yourself! You never loved me, certainly, or you never would have betrayed me in this base manner," he exclaimed.

Her white lips quivered—parted, but only inarticulate murmurs issued from them.

"But do not flatter yourself, girl, that your treachery

shall serve your purpose. Such a marriage, so procured, can never stand in law. And here, in the presence of these witnesses, I utterly refuse to acknowledge its validity, or to recognize you as my wife! Here, I renounce you forever!"

Her pleading hands were lifted in an agony of deprecation, and then dropped by her side in despair.

"Had you accepted the position I gave you, although I should never have seen your face again, yet I would have provided handsomely for your support. But now, since you have put this foul deception upon me, for all the help you can get from me, you may—PERISH!" he hissed.

"Not so," said the fine old gentleman, General Lyon, drawing the arm of the outraged and half crushed young creature, closer within his own. "Not so, by your leave. I charge myself with the care of *my niece*, Mrs. Alexander Lyon. Her home shall be *here*, with my granddaughter and myself—*here*, where she shall live in peace and safety—loved and honored, until such times as you—madman!—shall come to your senses, and sue more humbly for the forgiveness of the wronged wife, than you ever did for the love of the unhappy maiden."

"You had better be quite sure that the girl in your arm *is* a wife before you offer her the protection of your roof and the society of your granddaughter!" sneered Alexander, bitterly.

"Sir you have struck the last blow to your own honor and my patience. Alexander Lyon, if you were not the son of my dead brother I would curse you where you stand. But go!" said the old man, lifting up and stretching out his arm with an imperious gesture. "Leave this house, and never desecrate its halls again with your presence! and never again let me see your face!"

Cursing and stamping with fury, Alexander turned and flung himself from the room.

In the hall outside his voice was heard calling loudly to his servant to put his horses to his carriage and bring it around to the door.

General Lyon gazed down upon the poor young wife at his side, and said:

"Look up, my child. Here is your home and your father and your sister. Be of good comfort, trust in God, and all will be well."

She answered nothing, but sunk heavily within his aged arms, that yet were quite strong enough to support her sinking form. She had succumbed to one of those fainting fits which, through the agonies she had so long endured, had now become habitual to her.

"Grandpa, she has swooned! Marcy, come here quickly. You are strong; help to carry her to the sofa. Matty, go to the spare room opposite mine and turn down the bed; see to the fire, and come back and tell me when all is ready," exclaimed Anna, rapidly issuing her orders, while she hastily took off Drusilla's bridal wreath and veil, and unloosened her dress.

Marcy who had been in the group of servants assembled to witness the marriage cermony, was quickly on the spot, and with her assistance Anna bore the insensible form of Drusilla to the sofa and laid her on it.

General Lyon followed, looking anxiously upon the pale face of the sufferer.

Dr. Barbar and Mr. Hammond were left standing on the rug, and for the time being, forgotten by their host and hostess.

All available means were used to revive the swooning girl, but all in vain. Anna bathed her face with eau de cologne, and applied strong smelling salts to her nose; and Marcy smartly slapped her hands, but without effect.

While they were thus engaged Matty entered the drawing-room, and announced that the bed chamber was ready.

"We must take her there and undress her and put her to bed, Marcy; and then we shall have a better opportunity of applying restoratives," said Miss Lyon.

"Yes, Miss, for it's little we can do here," admitted Marcy.

"Dear grandpa," said Anna, addressing the old gentleman, who still stood watching with interest the face of the patient, "dear grandpa, you have been so worried this evening. Do sit down and rest and order some refreshments for yourself and for Dr. Barbar and Dick, who are being neglected. I shall take Drusilla to the Rose Room and see that every proper attention is given her."

"But she seems to be dead or dying," said General Lyon, uneasily.

"No, dear sir; she is only in a swoon, which is very

natural under all the circumstances; but not at all dangerous."

"I hope you are certain of this?!"

"Quite certain, sir. Now, Marcy, help me to lift her," said Anna.

But Dick Hammond, who heard and saw all that was going on, hastened forward to offer his services as bearer.

"Anna, do let me carry her up-stairs. I can do so with so much more ease to her than you and Marcy could," he said. And without waiting for leave, he tenderly raised the unconscious form and gently bore it after Marcy, who led the way up to the Rose Room.

Anna bade good night to Dr. Barbar, and then turned and kissed her grandfather and asked for his usual blessing.

"God bless you, my dear child, for you have done a righteous deed this night. Take care of the poor desolate girl up-stairs, and if I can be of any service to her, do not hesitate to call on me, even if you should have to wake me up in the night. My house, my purse, and myself, Anna, are at her orders no less than at yours, as long as she has wants and I have means," answered the grand old man, as he pressed a kiss upon his child's brow and dismissed her.

Anna hurried up-stairs and met Dick on the landing. He had just deposited his charge on her couch and left her room.

"Hallelujah, Dick!" exclaimed Anna.

"Hallelujah, Anna!" responded Dick, as their hands met in a hearty, congratulatory clasp.

"It is all right with us now, Anna?"

"All quite right now, Dick, darling."

Dick looked gratefully and then pleadingly in her face, as he took her hand again and gently drew her towards him.

But she laughingly broke away, exclaiming:

"Not now, Dick; not now, darling. I must go to my patient. We must not neglect that poor girl, to whom we owe all our happiness."

"Indeed we must not," earnestly agreed Dick.

"Then good night, Dick. I will see you in the morning."

"Good night, my liege lady. But stay If I can be of any use, pray command me at any hour of the day or night."

"That I will, Dick. Once more good night."

And Anna flitted past him and went into the Rose Room.

There she found that Marcy and Matty had already divested Drusilla of her bridal robes and clothed her in a loose white wrapper and put her comfortably to bed.

They now stood one on each side rubbing her hands.

"How is she?" inquired Anna, approaching and bending over the pallid face.

"No change yet, Miss; but we must be patient and keep up this friction, and she will come to presently," answered Marcy.

Anna went into her own chamber and quickly changed her splendid dress for a wadded white merino wrapper, and then returned to the sick chamber, and took her place beside the bed, saying:

"Matty, you may retire to rest. Marcy and myself will remain here to-night."

Matty, who was yawning fearfully, gladly availed herself of the permission and left the room.

And Miss Lyon willingly, gratefully, undertook the long night's watch over the suffering young creature to whose almost incredible energy and heroism she owed her own preservation from a fatal marriage and her hopes of happiness with the man she loved.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BALM FOR THE BRUISED HEART.

Nay, but Nature brings her solace, for a tender voice will cry,—
'Tis a purer life than his, a lip to drain her trouble dry.
Baby lips will laugh it down, his only rival bring her rest,
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press it from the mother's breast.
—TENNYSON.

THE great old-fashioned hall clock was striking the quarter before twelve when Richard Hammond re-entered the drawing-room.

He found General Lyon and Dr. Barbar still there, seated in large arm-chairs each side of the fireplace. They seemed to be discussing the events of the evening.

"Yes, old friend, my dog of a nephew, like that other grand rascal of old, has 'spoiled the feast, broke the good meeting, with most admired disorder,'" sighed the General.

"Ah, my dear sir, he is young, and we must be chari-

table. Even David, the man after the Lord's own heart, had to pray that the sins of his youth might not be remembered against him. Give the young man time to recollect himself and to reform. But I feel very sorry for the poor wife—she seems but a mere child."

"She is but sixteen or seventeen," said General Lyon.

"Ah dear, how sad! She seems to love him much."

"She loves a villain then, and must suffer accordingly."

"Will he never be reconciled to her, do you think?"

"Can she ever be reconciled to *him?* That is the question. 'My spirit shall not always strive with man, saith the Lord.' And if the Divine Spirit wearies of the fruitless struggle with Evil, how much sooner shall the human spirit sink? For myself, I should not wonder if she should experience such a revulsion of feeling as should make the very thought of that man hateful to her. But in any case her home is here, under our protection, until such time as he shall repent and show himself worthy to reclaim her hand, if that time ever should come. Ah! here is Dick. How did you leave our young charge, my boy?" inquired the General, for the first time conscious of Richard's presence.

"I left her in good hands, sir; otherwise much as she was when taken from this room. I understand, sir, that since her domestic sufferings commenced she has been very subject to these fainting fits. They are said to be not dangerous; but for my part, I should think there was reason to fear that her heart is affected," answered Richard, seeking a seat between the two old gentlemen.

"Dick, you were more engaged in this exposure of Alexander than Anna was willing to admit. You knew of his previous marriage before you came down here?" inquired the General.

"Yes, sir; but only a few days before; and I came down here for the express purpose of divulging it to you; and I brought with me the minister who performed the first ceremony, as proof of it. But before I saw you I chanced to meet Anna, who proposed to me another plan, which I thought to be a better one than my own."

"Yes, Anna's plan was assuredly the only one by which the ends of justice could be reached in this singular case."

"Shall I tell you, sir, how I came to be informed of the first marriage?"

"Oh no, Dick, not to night—to-morrow. Gentlemen, it is on the stroke of midnight. And though my sorry nephew has 'spoiled the feast,' et cetera, I see no reason why we should watch and fast the night through. We will have supper and then to bed. And although you are the only wedding guests, we will adjourn to the banqueting room," said General Lyon, arising and leading the way to a brilliantly lighted and elegantly decorated saloon, where a sumptuous supper was laid out.

The host led his two guests to the upper end of the table, and invited them to be seated.

The two Jacobs, father and son, stood ready to wait on them.

But what took away their appetites—whether it was the excitement of the evening, or the dreariness of a rich repast laid for many, and honored with the presence of but three; or the embarrassing variety of delicacies spread before them, is uncertain; but they could not eat. A broken biscuit and a glass of wine, was all that each took. And then, with mutual good nights and good wishes, they, separated.

General Lyon went to rest.

Old Jacob showed Dr. Barbar to the best vacant bedroom, and young Jacob led Dick Hammond to the second best.

It is to be hoped that the two old gentlemen slept well.

Dick did not close his eyes.

The revulsion from despair to hope, to certainty, of happiness, was almost too much for him. He lay rolling and tossing from side to side all night; telling himself over and over again that it was no dream; that Anna was free; and that he might at last be made happy with her hand and wondering how long it would be before he could coax Anna to name the happy day, and his uncle to give them his blessing. He heard the old hall clock strike every hour and thought the night would never come to an end.

At four o'clock on that winter morning, it was still very dark, when he heard rousing raps at his door.

"Well! who's there?" he cried.

"It's me, Master Dick," answered the voice of Marcy.

"Well! what do you want?"

"Please, sir, Miss Anna——"

Dick was out of bed in an instant, drawing on his pantaloons.

—"Says how young Mrs. Lyon is seemingly ill, and will you please to wake up the coachman, and tell him to take the fastest horse and ride quick as possible to Saulsburg for Dr. Leech.

Dick was dressed and at the door by the time Marcy had done speaking.

"Can I see Miss Anna for an instant?" he inquired.

"I will ask her," answered Marcy, hurrying down the passage.

Dick hastened after her, and waited outside Drusilla's door while Marcy went in to inquire.

Anna came out with a large shawl wrapped around her

"Oh, hurry, Dick! don't stop to talk! the poor child is very ill, and delay may be her death!" exclaimed Anna, as she appeared.

"I merely stopped to tell you, Anna, that I shall trust to no servant, least of all to slow old Jacob! I shall saddle my own fast horse, and fly for the doctor myself."

"You're a trump, Dick. Heaven bless you, be off!"

And Anna disappeared within the sick chamber. And Dick ran down to the stable, saddled his horse, leaped upon his back, struck spurs to his flanks and was off like an arrow in the direction of Saulsburg. "He skelpit on through dub and mire," so eager in his errand, that he scarcely noticed the storm was over, and the clouds were breaking overhead; a few pale stars were shining out, and day was faintly dawning in the East.

When he came to the toll-gate, as once before, he cleared the bar with a bound, and dashed onward, to the infinite indignation of old Andy who had just opened his shutters in time to witness the feat, and who turned to his old wife, then busy over the fire cooking the breakfast, and then exclaimed:

"Eh, Jenny, woman! the warlocks are flitting back frae the witches' Sabbath. There gaed ane noo!—on a broomstick, or something unco like it, right over the toll-gate bar and awa'! We'll hear the news the day, woman!"

Heedless of what the guardian of the road might think of him, Dick raced on, sending flakes of mud from his horse's heels.

The sun was rising behind the farthest range of moun-

tains, and sending his dazzling beams obliquely through the Wild Gap and athwart the Wild River, as Dick rode into Saulsburg and drew rein before the picturesque inn.

He had not the slightest idea whereabouts in the village or its neighborhood the country doctor lived.

So he inquired of the hostler who came to take his horse:

"Do you know where Dr. Leech hangs out?"

"I dunno where he hangs out, sir; bit you can ax him hisself. He lives right down the street there, sir," answered the man, pointing to a small, neat cottage, with a still smaller surgery beside it, and the name of "LEECH" over the door.

Dick left his horse and went and knocked up the doctor and, in a few urgent words, told him his services were instantly needed at Old Lyon Hall, where there was a lady in extremity, and entreated him to hasten immediately to her relief.

The good doctor needed no second bidding, but loudly called to shop-boy and horse-boy to have his saddle-bags and his horse got ready, and then rushed into the house to put on his greatcoat and hat.

When Dick had seen the doctor fairly started on his journey, he turned his steps to the little inn, entered it, and ordered breakfast.

"And have my horse well rubbed down and watered and fed. I must mount him again in an hour," he added.

At this time of the day there always happened to be more servants than guests at the "Foaming Tankard," and so Dick and his horse were both promptly served.

But while Mr. Hammond sat enjoying the fragrant coffee, light rolls, sweet butter, luscious ham and fresh eggs that formed the repast, for which his early ride had given him so keen an appetite, he was suddenly interrupted.

It was "mammy" who burst in upon his privacy with more haste than ceremony, demanding:

"If you please, sir, wasn't you the gentleman as come down with us in the night coach from Drainsville and got off at Frostville?"

"Yes! and wasn't you the lady that scalped me and broke both my legs?" laughed Dick.

"I hope you surwived it, sir? But that wasn't what I comed to ax you."

"Yes; having a good constitution, I got over it. But what *did* you come to ask me?"

"Please, sir, no offence; but is it as the boys say, you come from Old Lyon Hall this morning?"

"Yes."

"Arter a doctor?"

"Yes."

"For a lady in 'streme 'stress?"

"Yes."

"Young Mrs. Lyon, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then, sir, that was my own lady; and I jest knowed how it would be! I jest did! Sir, she left here in an old ramshakly concern as broke down with her afore she so much as got a mile from the place; and then she up and set out to walk all the way through the storm to the hall; and which if I'd a knowed, I'd a seen the old hall and everybody into it farther afore I'd a let her a risted of her life by so doing. But that there blamed boy,—Lord forgive me for swearing,—arter he'd upset her in the road, took all the rest of the evening to haul off the old wreck of a carriage, and never got back here till I had gone to bed. So I never knowed nothing about it till this morning, which a purty state my nerves has been in ever since."

And mammy, having talked herself out of breath, dropped down in a chair and panted.

"You were this lady's nurse?" inquired Dick, buttering a roll.

"In course I was, sir; perfessionally so; and recommended by the highest gentlemen of the physical persuasion."

"Then, my good woman, I wonder why your patient didn't take you along with her."

"So do I, sir. That was a very sensible remark of yours; but you see, sir, she preferred to leave me here in care of the baggidge, which I will say this—that mind can't conceive, nor tongue tell the trouble I've had to pertect them there two little red morocky trunks from being stoled or left behind!"

"Indeed?"

"True as I tell you, sir; so I don't much wonder at the madam wanting of me to stay behind to watch them.

"No, nor I," said Dick, slily. "But, my good woman," he added, "I think now that the best thing you can do is to go to your mistress.

"Which such is my intention so to do, sir; and I would be obliged to you if you would be so good as to speak to that there pig-headed landlord—begging your pardon, sir, but so he is—to let me have a decent horse and wagon, that won't break down, to take me and the baggidge to the old hall, which, if you are going back there, sir, yourself, you can show me the way."

"Yes," said Dick, with good-natured alacrity, seeing at once how important it might be that Drusilla should have her nurse and her wardrobe. "Yes I will attend to it at once."

And he arose and rang the bell, and told the waiter who answered it to send the landlord to him.

The slow host came sauntering in with his hands in his pockets, and in answer to Dick's inquiries, deliberately acknowledged that he had "such a thing," and a bargain was soon struck for a wagon, horse and driver to take mammy and her luggage to Old Lyon-Hall.

"But the bill is not yet paid," said the landlord, hesitatingly, "and so I would rather keep a part of the luggage for security until it is settled. One of the little trunks, now, might do."

"Set you up with it, indeed!" fiercely exclaimed mammy, as much ruffled as a hen when her nest is threatened.

"But who's to pay the bill?" pursued the host.

"I shall," answered Dick, coldly.

"No you won't sir, begging of your pardon; that wouldn't be noways proper. The young madam left her port-munny 'long o' me to settle all claims. Bring your 'count in here to me, mister landlord, and I'll settle of it myself."

"And not to lose time while he is making it out you had better go and get ready to start," counseled Dick.

"So I had, sir; that's another very sensible remark of yours. And I'll not keep you waiting one minute; I'll be ready as soon as the wagon is," said the old woman, hurrying out of the room.

And in less than twenty minutes mammy reappeared ready for her journey. The bill was paid, the wagon brought around and loaded with the luggage, and the

nurse and the team started, escorted by Mr. Richard Hammond on horseback, and cheered by all the ragamuffins in the village.

It does not take long after a storm is over for the water to run off the roads of that region, which are high roads in more senses than one; so the travel was not so bad as might have been expected.

In little more than two hours the "procession," arrived at the toll-gate where old Andy was on duty.

"Eh, sirs!" he exclaimed, on seeing Dick, "but ye's a braw callant! Wha gave ye commission to loup twice over my bar, and cheat my of me toll? Eh, but ye'll bide where ye be till ye pay me for a', e'en to the uttermost fearthing, before I let ye by; for ye's no jump your wagon over the gate, I'm thinking."

"Certainly, of course, all right. You see I was in too great a hurry to stop to make change, or to wait to have the gate opened when I passed here last night and early this morning. But now open quickly to me. And here, here is what will pay you for all the tolls and leave something besides to buy a winter gown for the gudewife," said Dick, laughing, and tossing a ten dollar gold coin to the old man. "And tell her this from me," added the kind-hearted fellow, "that the girl she took so much interest in is quite safe and well-cared for."

But Andy was not concerned about the safety of the girl, he was stooping to pick up the gold eagle, and muttering to himself:

"Eh! how the lad flings about his gowd, to be sure. It's weel a carefu' body like mysel' is nigh to gather it up. What was you saying anent the young hizzy, sir?" he inquired, looking up.

"Tell your good wife she is safe and well cared for."

"Ou, ay! it would be i' some house o' correction; only there's nae sic a useful institootion in the country," growled Andy.

"Never mind where she is, or who she is. Tell your wife she is all right!" said Dick, as he sauntered through the gate in advance of the wagon.

The worst part of the road was past, and so in something less than an hour the "cortège" arrived at Lyon Hall.

The doctor had been there already for some time and

he was then with young Mrs. Lyon, who seemed to all around her to be at the point of death.

Such was the report of General Lyon, who immediately rang for a woman servant to show the nurse up to her patient.

"And I am very glad you thought to fetch her, Dick," added the honest old General.

Dick explained that such thoughtfulness was no merit of his; that this woman had attended the young wife down from Washington, and had been left temporarily at Saulsburg, and had availed herself of his escort to come on to the hall.

So mammy was taken up to her patient, whom she found much too ill to be scolded for her imprudence.

In fact Drusilla was, as they said, almost at the point of death. Her life hung upon the slenderest thread for five days, at the end of which she became the mother of a beautiful boy.

As her illness before his birth had been severe and dangerous, so her convalescence afterwards was slow and precarious. For many more days she lay in a mental and physical prostration, so profound that she was incapable of noticing her child, and even of realizing its existence. But her youth and her good constitution were very much in her favor.

Gradually, very gradually, she came out of this depressed state.

The first signs of reviving life she gave was the interest she showed in her babe.

Before she had strength to speak above her breath, or sense to connect a sentence properly, she would mutely insist upon having him laid on her arm and next her bosom; and then with a serene smile she would sink into a tranquil sleep.

And then, lest even the light weight of the infant should be too much for her feeble strength, the nurse would steal the sleeping child from the sleeping mother and lay him in the pretty berceaunette that had been purchased and decorated for him by Anna.

As the weeks went on, the young mother continued to revive; and her interest in her infant boy became a passionate love, that grew with her growing strength.

When she was able to be dressed and recline in her

easy-chair, she would sit hours with the babe clasped to her bosom.

Strangely enough, that female martinet, the monthly nurse, never objected to this.

And to all Anna's remonstrances Drusilla would answer:

"Oh, Miss Lyon, you don't know, you can't know, what this soft little form is to me, as I hold it to my bosom It is such a soothing balm—such a heavenly comfort."

Sometimes Anna would take an opportunity to speak to mammy on the subject; but mammy would answer:

"You let her alone, Miss. It's all natur' and all right. The baby'll save her life. It'll draw all the soreness out'n her heart and heal it up; mind me."

But suddenly the thought came to the young mother that she was perhaps injuring her child by holding him in her lap so constantly. And then all her conduct with it changed. She would take him up only to nurse and get him to sleep. And then she would lay him in his little decorated cradle; but that cradle stood always by her side, so that, sleeping or waking, her infant son was never out of her sight.

It was beautiful to see the interest that the old General and his granddaughter took in this young mother and child.

General Lyon visited Drusilla every morning, bringing some rare offering of fruit ordered from the city, or flowers from his own conservatory.

Anna was seldom out of the chamber. Every forenoon she took her needle-work and went to keep Drusilla company.

And often they might be seen sitting, working together, with the baby in the cradle between them.

Dick, in his enthusiasm, said of this group, that it was "a sleeping cherub watched by two guardian angels."

"Watched by guardian angels," in her home of peace, we will also leave the young, forsaken wife.

Whether Drusilla ever was re-united with her husband, or whether Dick was ever really reclaimed from the clutches of his "friends," and rewarded with the hand of Anna, will be duly related in the sequel to this book, under the title of "The Bride's Fate."

THE END.